

# CHARACTER AND THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGY FOR EVERYMAN

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TO  
MY WIFE

TO WHOSE INTUITIVE INSIGHT I OWE WHATEVER  
UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN NATURE I HAVE ACQUIRED





## PREFACE

THE rôle of sophist is not one to be lightly assumed in this age. Time was when sophists were held in high esteem ; those who practised their calling with success dwelt in palaces and were the companions of emperors and statesmen. To-day the man who should adopt sophism as his profession would condemn himself to obscurity and poverty. It is not easy to say just why this great profession has fallen from its high place and why its name has become a byword and a reproach. For the business of the sophist is to help men to live wisely ; and, surely, the wise conduct of life is now a more difficult matter than in any former age !

We still have not a few esteemed philosophers ; but, in so far as they concern themselves with conduct, they wrestle with such venerable puzzles as the nature of the chief good, the ' problem of evil ' and the reason why any man should seek to lead the good life. The rôle of the sophist is a humbler one. Observing that two thousand years of discussion have failed to solve these high and ultimate problems, he is content to set out with two facts : first, that many men desire to live wisely and to live well, preferring good to evil ; secondly, that, in spite of the widely different answers returned by philosophers to their problems, men of all ages and of the most diverse creeds and civilizations are pretty well agreed as to what is good and what bad in conduct and character, such differences as obtain being merely matters of emphasis on this or that quality. With these facts as his premises he may hope to aid some men and women to reflect profitably on the conduct of their own lives and to avoid some of those errors which, even though venial, may yet render them less happy than they might be or even go far to wreck their lives completely. He may hope also to aid some of his fellows in a task of primary importance which none of us can altogether escape, the task, namely, of so influencing others, more especially young people, that they shall be better, happier, more successful for their contact with ourselves.

Something of this sort, then, is what I have attempted in this book. It is directed to men and women of goodwill who are not completely satisfied with themselves, who believe that by taking thought they may add, however little, to their moral stature and to their efficiency in working towards whatever goals they may have adopted. The book is an essay in practical morals and is not at all concerned with ethical theories. A few moderns have written books of similar aims. I say a few: for I am not referring to the multitude of books bearing some such title as "New Thought," books which in general claim to provide some sovereign remedy for all human ills; and I am one of those who cannot find reason to believe in the existence of panaceas, elixirs of life, and philosopher's stones, one of those who believe rather that the price of liberty and human dignity is unceasing vigilance and perpetual struggle with the infirmities of our own nature. Regarding the modern books of the kind which this one aspires to be (a small range of books of which the two extremes are marked to my thinking by Lecky's "Map of Life" and Maeterlinck's "Wisdom and Destiny") I seem to find one defect common to them all, namely, a lack of precision in their conception of what human nature is. For, surely, if we would form some useful notion of what human beings may and should become under intensive cultivation, and, still more, if we would know how to conduct the process of cultivation so as to make some progress towards that ideal, we must start with some notion of the raw material provided by Nature for us to work upon!

Having spent a third of a century in the endeavour to acquire some useful conception of this raw material of human nature, I feel justified in trying to make use of such results as I have reached. Those results are embodied in more or less technical fashion in several earlier volumes.<sup>1</sup> In the present volume I take those results as my starting point and am content to state them very concisely; being chiefly concerned with their application to the practical problems of conduct. But, although my earlier books have been almost exclusively scientific, I am not altogether a new

<sup>1</sup> Most fully in the two volumes of my "Outline of Psychology."

hand at the game of practical application ; for I have to admit in my own case the truth of the charge so often made against British thinkers in general, namely, that their primary and fundamental interest is in questions of practice or conduct and that they derive from this their speculative or theoretical interests.

That this book is founded upon, and consists in the practical application of, a consistently thought-out scheme of human nature is, then, its chief claim upon the attention of the public and is the ground of my hope that it may be found to go a little farther than others of similar aim in affording practical guidance in the conduct of life.

A great writer (the late W. E. H. Lecky) has said : “ The main object of human life is the full development and useful employment of whatever powers we possess.” And again he wrote : “ Science has done much to rectify the chart of life, pointing out more clearly the true conditions of human well-being and disclosing much baselessness and many errors in the teachings of the past.” Many sciences have contributed towards this rectification ; but, surely, the science which should have most to contribute to it is the science of mental life in man ! That science, commonly called psychology, has, by reason of its many and great difficulties, taught many partial and distorted truths and many errors, has in consequence been a misleading guide to practice and has fallen into grave disrepute. But in recent years the science has, I believe, made real and solid progress and has achieved a body of truths and principles which may serve as a sure basis for practice, may guide us in the endeavour fully to develop and usefully to employ whatever powers we possess.

But science alone is not enough.

Another great writer has said : “ La science est la puissance de l'homme et l'amour sa force ; l'homme ne devient homme que par l'intelligence, mais il n'est homme que par le cœur. Savoir, aimer et pouvoir, c'est là la vie complète.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The passage is from “Fragments d'un Journal Intime” by Henri-Frédéric Amiel, a book which is too little known to English readers. I have found occasion to cite a number of passages from the pen of this most penetrating author, and, since I have found it impossible to translate them without losing their original force and beauty, I have taken the liberty of transcribing them untranslated.

Wisdom is of the heart no less than of the head; and, though the principles of a science may be rapidly assimilated, the share of wisdom that comes from the heart comes only with much experience of joy and sorrow, hope, disappointment, effort, failure and success. Being convinced of this, I am not in the modern fashion of believing that wisdom is the peculiar property of the young and that a man necessarily grows more and more foolish from his thirtieth year onward. We often hear it said that there is a vast difference between the youth of twenty and the mature man of thirty. Looking back on my own life, I can recognize a considerable advance in that period; but I seem to find evidence of a much greater progress both of head and heart in the years between thirty and fifty. Especially I have found that in all that relates to sex a cool, clear, objective judgment first became possible after my fiftieth year.

I am therefore disposed to exclaim with the poet :

“ Ah ! Wisdom comes not when it is all gold  
And the great price we pay for it full worth.  
We have it only when we are half earth.  
Little avails that treasure to the old.”

In plain prose, it is the tragedy of “ This our life ” that for the most part we attain to wisdom only when we are no longer capable of making good use of it.

The purpose of this book may, then, be concisely defined as the aiding of men and women to acquire a little more rapidly the wisdom that comes only through experience and through reflection upon human life.

Though I am old-fashioned enough to believe that age in the main brings increase of wisdom, I am not a contemner of youth. The only serious charge I bring against the young people of the present day is that they are allowing themselves to fall victims to the sterilizing influences of universal mechanization. These influences work in a multitude of subtle ways to hamper our imagination and our will and to abolish romance from our lives. Mr. Kipling assures us that, in spite of the dominance of machines, still “ romance brings up the nine-fifteen.” This may

be true of him and me and of a few other old fogies. But is it true of modern youths? When one finds them bored by a voyage to the magic East, or sitting solemnly at bridge or poker beneath the moving and sombre splendours of a tropical sunset, it is difficult to believe it. To us the prospect of a non-stop flight from China to Peru may seem romantic and thrilling. But will it be thrilling or stimulating to the imagination when such flights are daily made by thousands, at a fixed tariff, in aerial liners fitted with every luxury of the modern hotel? In the old days it was always possible to hope that a boy might run away to sea and spend "two years before the mast." But now-a-days masts have given place to electric derricks; and, if a boy should go to sea, he could hardly get beyond the reach of his mother's anxious inquiries about his underwear. Yesterday C. M. Doughty spent two years wandering in Arabia Deserta and described his travels in an immortal book. To-morrow our adventurously disposed young men will bustle across the same tract in Ford cars or aeroplanes and will come back with little more than expert opinions on the running qualities of their engines.

With these words I indicate what seems to me the greatest danger of the present, the greatest threat of the future. This danger has already taken formal shape in America, where, in the name of science, many thousands of young people are every year taught to believe that man is literally nothing more than a piece of mechanism, without power or influence on his destiny. Against this fatalistic dogma, so destructive of aspiration and so weakening to all higher effort, I have not ceased to wage war in my own little corner since I first began to write. It is of course utterly incompatible with the tendency and teaching of this book; for the book is founded on the view that by thought and effort men and races may "rise on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things"; that, dark as the outlook may seem, the doors of the prison-house are not closed, open rather on to an immeasurable prospect.

Some readers of this book will accuse it of a very grave omission. I have not attempted to say anything on the proper rôle of religion in human life; and for the good

reason that I have no confident opinion on that great question. If I have a religion, its first precept is that we shall seek truth faithfully ; and I would say with Emerson : " God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please. You can never have both."

SARAWAK,

W. McD.

*April 1927*

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“IT IS THE PREROGATIVE OF MAN TO BE  
IN A GREAT DEGREE A CREATURE OF  
HIS OWN MAKING.”

EDMUND BURKE



# THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

## CHAPTER I

### OUR NEED OF SELF-CRITICISM

“**K** NOW thyself ” ; that is a maxim which wise men long ago propounded as fundamentally important. In this modern world of ours its importance is greater than ever. Self-knowledge is only to be obtained by critical reflection about oneself, about other persons and about our relations to one another. Reflection about oneself is necessarily introspective ; one has to look inwards and observe the movements of the mind, the impulses of the heart, the workings of conscience, the nature and direction of desires, the shrinkings and aversions and antipathies we discover ; one has to learn not only to recognize these things for what they are, but also to value them, to estimate them as good, bad or indifferent, and to discover whether they are deeply rooted, pervasive and recurrent, or merely fleeting and incidental.

Am I, then, inviting you, my reader, to be introspective ? A terrible word ! Will not every schoolmaster throw up his hands in horror and tell you that to be introspective is to be morbid ? he will explain that the curriculum of his school is so well organized that his boys are in no danger of becoming introspective ; every moment of their time is filled with lessons, preparations and games ; they are so surrounded and beset with calls to busy themselves about the world around them that no time is left them for brooding upon themselves, on human fate, on the strangeness of human life, on the miracles of birth, growth, decay and death, of self-consciousness, self-direction and moral responsibility. Under this system, which obtains its most complete expression in the English public schools and in the Oxford

colleges, the boy develops his powers of thought and action, learns to conform to the principles of good form (among which is included conformity to the observances of religion as by law established); if he has capacities above the average, he probably acquires a healthy ambition for worldly success, a fixed desire to shine in one or other of the recognized walks of life; if he is average, he sets out to make a living respectably and to compensate for the burden of the daily task by as much sport, bridge and jazz as can be worked in between the inevitable hours of routine labour. The system works to a certain extent; it produces the public-school type—a good type, but not the highest type; a barbarian type, a type well able to get on so long as things go reasonably well, able to play the game so long as the game goes according to the rules; but a type which is puzzled, baffled, lost, as soon as things go wrong, as soon as he confronts a situation to which the conventional rules do not apply.

Up to the middle of the nineteenth century much might be and was said in favour of this barbarian type of education. But the world has been changing rapidly in the last three-quarters of a century. Social life and social relations have become indefinitely more complex. In the old days a man was born to a certain social status; only a very exceptional man, here and there, escaped from that status. And in the position to which he was born—squire, farmer, labourer, artisan, professional man, or what not—he grew up, inevitably accepting a traditional code of conventions, a code that sufficed for his guidance in the greater part of all his activities. There were the Ten Commandments and there was the Church; there was the special code of his profession; and there were the requirements of good form very clearly laid down and universally accepted by his social circle. So long as he conformed to these, he got on pretty well; and even some departure from strict conformity was not fatal. He must on no account steal; he must not lie; he ought not to commit adultery, though, as he probably would, he must do it discreetly. He ought to subscribe to local charity and support the Church, the King and the Country, and bring up his children to fear God, to fear

himself, to respect the same code and observe the same traditions.

In these days those old-fashioned ways of life, those old guides to conduct, rough-and-ready rules not always adequate, even in the old days, are hopelessly insufficient. The authority of religion has been gravely impaired ; every convention has been questioned, denied, or "scrapped" ; every tradition blown upon ; every precept and rule of life shown to be relative and conditional on particular circumstances. The wisdom of our forefathers, embodied in customs, conventions and maxims, no longer suffices. Every man is faced with innumerable problems of conduct and called upon to think them out for himself. Our remote ancestors lived by instinct helped out by a little intelligence. Our forefathers lived by the light of accumulated traditions which controlled their instinctive impulses—to some extent. We, endowed with the same strong instincts and the same small dose of intelligence, and lacking the guidance of accepted traditions, have to try to live by the light of reason. We are so placed that every personal relation presents us with problems which we have to solve as best we may.

Consider the modern parent. Unlike his forbears, he cannot be content to teach the catechism to his children, to chastise them when they disobey, to train them to do as he and his forefathers have done from time immemorial, to bow down before the same gods and worship at the same shrines. If he were to attempt the impossible task, he would but evoke their resentment, their scorn and contempt, and make of them his lifelong enemies.

Consider the modern children. They hear on every hand that the old people have made a mess of everything, that the old ways are foolish and wrong ; they see their elders groping blindly for new light or rigidly adhering to the old forms, dealing out unhappiness to themselves and to all about them in the vain endeavour to make the old bottles contain the new wine. And they are told that it is for them to create a new social world, a world better, freer, saner, happier, than the old one. All the old landmarks are removed, all the old institutions are in the melting-pot.

marriage, parenthood, the old political faiths, patriotism and loyalty, the old religious beliefs, the old standards of taste in literature and art and manners—all are questioned, all are threatened by new rivals ; no longer can they be accepted with simple piety. The *Götterdämmerung* is upon us. In all things the young people are called upon to make their own judgments, to decide what is good and what is bad, what is admirable and what is meretricious or despicable.

Old and young and middle-aged, all alike, we have to bestir ourselves, use our best judgment, think out all things anew, distinguish, choose and reject, and, if possible, by selection from all the old patterns offered by all times and all places, and by original experiment and invention, we have to work out new codes, new guides for the conduct of life. And those of us who seek to avoid all part in this tremendous task, hoping to live by the old lights alone, will find the need of reflection upon conduct hardly less urgent, if they would avoid the bitternesses, the estrangements, the resentments which the conflict of new with old things almost inevitably engenders.

In all this ferment of experiment, of invention, of selection, we need, above all things, understanding of human nature, understanding of others and of ourselves, especially ourselves. Self-knowledge is the best and surest way to the understanding of others ; and to each of us it is indispensable for the guidance of his own little bark through the troubled waters of modern life. A man may have a pretty good understanding of his fellows and yet remain strangely blind to his own strengths and weaknesses, his idiosyncrasies, his irrational prejudices, his violent antipathies, his defects of temper and character, his own virtues and his own vices. And self-knowledge is only to be attained by critical reflection upon oneself, upon one's qualities, one's defects, one's motives, one's aims, one's conduct in all the relations of life.

There are persons, oftener women than men, so happily constituted and so happily placed by fate that they seem to need no reflection and no self-criticism. Their every action seems right and gracious, charming and spontaneous.

They diffuse happiness about them ; and we would not have them other than they are. We feel that, if such persons should stop to think, to ask themselves : Is this right ? How shall I act in this case ? half their charm would vanish, their manners would be less gracious and their conduct not so perfectly adapted to every occasion. But such persons unfortunately are few ; and even they, perhaps at the cost of some of their so charming spontaneity, may, by reflection, fortify themselves against the accidents that may mar the smooth tenor of their way. A failure of health, a moral shock, a loss or violent change of social position, may throw such a person off the smooth track ; and then the lack of self-knowledge, the unreflecting spontaneity of feeling and action that evoked the homage of all observers, may be the ground of inadaptability, may lead to failure and much unhappiness.

How, then, may self-knowledge be attained and effectively applied to the guidance of conduct ? The oldest and most natural method is the method of conversation. Most men and more women love to discuss personal problems. But this way, though much may be learnt by it, has the great limitation that we are apt to discuss the affairs of others, their personalities, their virtues, their defects, their vices, without seeing the bearing of all these revelations upon our own case. The same is true of the other great method by which we attain knowledge of human nature, namely, the study of art and literature. In the drama, in poetry, in biography, and especially in the modern novel, we have great stores of illustrations and reflections upon human nature and conduct. And yet how often do we not find persons soaked in art or in the best literature, lovers of poetry or inveterate novel-readers, who seem to have profited little from all their studies ! They present, perhaps, in their own persons and actions glaring examples of the faults, the defects, the rigidities which they have so often contemplated in the imaginative sphere ; or they fail to display (and seem to be unconscious of the fact) those virtues and graces which in others they have learnt to appreciate and admire.

There is, then, no avoiding the necessity of cultivating

the power of reflective self-criticism, of making it a fundamental part of the art of living, if in this so complex modern world we would choose wisely our goals, strive effectively to attain them, shape our characters nobly, live usefully and happily. To the promotion of this fundamental part of the art of living this book is designed to contribute. Let the reader, as he turns the pages, ask himself in relation to each topic discussed: How far does this apply to me? Do I commit this fault? Have I sufficiently developed this admirable trait? Do I share this weakness? Can I not attain a little more of that strength? And, in practice, let him remember that every action and every thought and feeling leaves its mark upon the mind, contributes something to the shaping of personality.

## CHAPTER II

### HUMAN NATURE

I HAVE pointed to one way in which the reading of literature that deals with human nature too often fails as an aid to self-criticism, discipline, development ; namely, the reader neglects to apply to his own case the wise reflections, the striking illustrations, the dreadful and the fine examples of character and conduct in which such literature abounds. I do not wish to belittle the value of such reading. I hold that such reading, even the reading of second-rate novels, is a civilizing process, one that makes for less of crudity in our personal relations. I feel sure that many men who despise the reading of novels, as an occupation fit only for idle women, might by the practice of such reading be much improved as lovers, husbands and fathers, and might with advantage give to it a little of the time they devote to golf and bridge.

But there is another way in which such reading fails to do for the reader as much as might be hoped ; namely, the language used in describing and discussing conduct and character is very vague and inadequate. The adjectives and substantives employed have no fixed meanings ; each author uses them in his own way. A great author like George Eliot or George Meredith may succeed in conveying a vivid picture of a personality and in giving the reader much insight into his motives and character ; yet that is achieved by an artistic process comparable to the many touches of the brush by which a painter works up a portrait and gives it truth and beauty. As a rule, neither the writer nor the reader knows just how the synthetic effect is produced. We need to supplement the study of such artistic synthetic work by more scientific analytic studies, in which we try to give fixed and definite meanings to all the words used.

I, therefore, begin our study by trying to define the meanings of some of the more important words which we all use in discussing human nature. I cannot claim that the usage

I adopt is universally accepted ; the lack of agreement in such usage is just the initial difficulty we have to try to overcome, and we can do that only by trying to fix the meanings somewhat arbitrarily. The definitions I make here have been explained and justified at some length in my other more technical books.

#### OUR INBORN NATURE

Such expressions as "our common human nature" and "one touch of fellow-feeling makes the whole world kin" imply the generally recognized truth that there is much of what we call human nature that is common to all men, whether they be dukes or scavengers, savants or savages. The same truth is implied by the fact that, wherever you go, from China to Peru and from Pole to Pole, it is easy, with a little goodwill, to get into sympathetic touch with the people you come across. The lack of a common spoken language is not so serious a matter ; everywhere a smile provokes a responsive smile, laughter provokes laughter, pain and sorrow evoke pity. Anger, fear, disgust, curiosity, pride, humility and love are depicted everywhere in the same unmistakable fashion, in the facial play, the tone of the voice, the bodily attitudes and gestures. Even children too young to use many words recognize these signs and are quick to respond appropriately. There are men from whom children of every race will shrink away ; and men to whom children in every land quickly, almost instantaneously, respond with trusting smiles.

All this is evidence of the large extent of the inborn nature common to all men. In what does it consist ? And what is the extent of it ? At the present time science can answer these questions only in a very tentative and incomplete way.

#### INTELLIGENCE

All men (I mean of course all normal men, idiots and other defectives excluded) are born with what we vaguely call "intelligence." They are not born with ready-made knowledge and skill, but with latent capacity for acquiring



knowledge by observation and skill by practice, and for using that acquired knowledge and skill more or less effectively in the guidance of actions. The capacity to acquire knowledge and skill we call vaguely "memory"; the capacity to apply them effectively we call "intelligence." The word "intelligence," thus broadly used, covers a vast range of adaptive actions, from that of the burnt child who avoids the fire, to the highest flights of imagination which discover new truth. This vast vague something that we call "intelligence" is certainly susceptible of analysis; but science is now only at the beginning of this work of analysis, and we must be content to state the view which at present seems best supported.

It seems that there is something common to all men (and also to the animals in their various degrees) which we may call "intelligence" in the narrow or strict sense, the highly general function of profiting by experience, of adapting our actions to present circumstances in the light of past experience of similar circumstances. This function is manifested in the simplest form when the child shrinks from the fire after burning his fingers, or looks on the floor for the toy he has dropped from his mother's lap. It is shown in more subtle form when the experienced diplomat presents his credentials and makes "a good impression" on the minister for foreign affairs. It seems that we inherit this "intelligence" in various degrees; some inherit it in high degree, some in low degree, and most of us in moderate degree. It is that which an army of psychologists is attempting to measure with their array of ingenious "intelligence tests." Of all the distinguishable features or factors of our inborn constitution it is the most valuable, the most indispensable. The man who is endowed with it in very low degree remains an idiot or moron, and, all his life long, requires to be cared for by others who have more of it. The man who has it in high degree may be deficient in many other respects; but, if he be not grossly deficient in these other respects, he has good prospect of getting on in the world. The man who has it in very modest degree only may have compensating advantages: he may have a remarkably tenacious memory, great facility with figures, great musical capacity, or delicate

æsthetic taste; yet, though he may enjoy also every external advantage, he will hardly achieve the first rank along any line of activity.

The facts mentioned in the last sentence show that, in addition to our dose of intelligence proper, or "general intelligence," we are endowed also with what may be called special forms of intelligence, facilities in acquiring certain special accomplishments. And the fact that these special facilities run strongly in families shows that they are inborn or hereditary.

How many such special inborn facilities should be distinguished we cannot say. And we do not know whether each one of them should be regarded as an inherited unit or as a cluster of smaller units. It seems probable that tenacity of memory is a single unit. On the other hand, it is probable that musical capacity and mathematical capacity and æsthetic taste are complexes, but that the units of which they are composed tend to hang together in the process of hereditary transmission.

The endowments discussed in the foregoing paragraphs are those which contribute to intellectual development; they are the raw material which, by exercise, by long practice and discipline, are built up into what we vaguely call "intellect" or "the intellectual structure of the mind." There is another side to the mind which, though it functions always in closest relation with the intellectual factors, is broadly distinguishable; this other side we may call broadly the emotional and volitional side, "the heart" in distinction from "the head." It is this other side with which we are more particularly concerned in discussing conduct and character; and we must endeavour to form a picture of the raw materials, the inborn features, factors or constituents, of this part of the total personality.

#### EMOTIONAL OR ACTIVE TENDENCIES

Just as all animals of any one species display certain natural tendencies which are proper to that species, which determine the main lines of the life-history of each individual

and are essential to its self-preservation and propagation, so also do all members of the human species. All members of the species wolf, for example, show the following tendencies : to congregate in packs ; to hunt down and devour animal prey ; to seek mates of their own kind ; to fight with one another ; to cherish and protect their young ; to explore curiously all strange striking objects and places ; to flee in terror from fire, lightning and thunder ; to seek shelter in retired lairs which they share with mates and young. The tendencies thus displayed by animals are clearly inborn ; and the manner in which they are displayed is in the main inborn, but owes something to individual experience. All male wolves fight in much the same way ; yet the experienced old wolf will fight more warily and effectively than he did in his first encounters. They all hunt in much the same way ; yet the old wolf has grown wise about the behaviour of the different kinds of animals on which he preys.

Such inborn general tendencies in the animals we call instincts. And there is no good reason why the similar general tendencies inborn in the human species should not be called by the same name. But, lest we offend the sensibilities of those readers who do not like to recognize their affinities to their humbler relatives, let us call them emotional tendencies ; for, when any one of these tendencies is brought strongly into play in a human being, he experiences and displays signs of a particular emotion. When the tendency to flee or shrink away and to seek cover in some sheltered spot is excited, he feels and displays signs of fear. When his efforts or desires are thwarted, the tendency to fight is evoked and he feels and shows signs of anger. When the cry of distress of a little child evokes the tendency to take it in his arms and protect and comfort it, he feels and displays signs of tender emotion. When a strange dark cavern moves him to explore its depth, when anything strange, unfamiliar, portentous, strikes his attention, he feels and displays signs of curiosity, wonder or awe.

Exactly how many such distinct inborn tendencies human nature comprises we cannot say ; but we can confidently recognize a number of such tendencies that seem to be

common to the men of all races and of all times. And when, as we so often do, we speak of the immutability and universality of human nature, it is chiefly these inborn tendencies that are implied. For they are the dynamic foundations of the whole structure of personality. They rough-hew our ends, shape them how we may. They supply the force, energy or driving power which sustains us in all our activities, bodily and mental. The intellect with all its distinguishable functions, such as memory, recognition, discrimination, association, judgment and reasoning, is their servant, finding the ways to the goals which they prescribe.

The fundamental rôle in human life of these inborn emotional tendencies is most forcibly illustrated by the sex tendency. It is not the source of all the manifestations of love between man and woman ; but it is indisputably the ground tone of the chords of that harmony. Without it, such love would be something extremely different from what it is. To it is due in the main the immense driving power of such love, the intensity of its pleasures and its pains, and the violence of its complex emotions. It is certain that, but for the working of this tendency within us, the human race would quickly come to an end. It is owing to its great impulsive power and the vast importance of its consequences that, in all societies, from the simplest to the most highly civilized, its operations are checked, controlled and guided by a complex system of customs, institutions and conventions that are supported by the strongest sanctions of law and religion.

To understand something of the nature and working of these inborn tendencies is, then, a prime necessity, if we would profitably discuss problems of conduct and character. Let us try to enumerate and concisely define those that seem most indisputable.

Five such tendencies I have mentioned in the foregoing pages, the tendencies of fear, anger, tenderness, curiosity and sex.

In addition to these we have a tendency to seek the company of our fellows and to stay among them when we have found them.

We have also a tendency to display and assert ourselves

amongst our fellows, and to find satisfaction in their yielding to us their submission, deference and admiration.

We have a contrary tendency to yield submission and deference to those who are powerful, to bow down and humble ourselves before them, to follow them and trust them.

We have a tendency to reject, to turn away with disgust from, whatever is foul and odious.

We have a tendency to cry aloud for help when we are at the end of our tether, when we find that our best efforts avail nothing and our desire is utterly frustrated.

We have a tendency to seek and consume food and drink.

We have a tendency to arrange, to build up, to construct, to bring into some kind of order whatever we are dealing with.

We have a tendency to hoard, to store away, to preserve whatever seems to us of value.

We have a tendency to make merry, to laugh aloud, when we see others making a mess of things, failing, slipping, baffled, buffeted or perplexed, acting stupidly or clumsily.

We have also very simple tendencies to respond appropriately to certain bodily sensations, sensations announcing needs of bodily organs that require for their removal the co-operation of the whole organism.

#### THE NATURAL HISTORY OF OUR INBORN TENDENCIES

Each of these tendencies has a normal course of development. None of them is fully developed at birth. Each one shows itself first obscurely and faintly, grows stronger and more definite, and then, as the vital energies fail in old age, dies down. By the time they come into full activity, the intellectual functions also and the power of varied bodily movement have developed; and then each of them is liable to be brought into play by a multitude of objects and circumstances and is apt to manifest itself in a great variety of bodily movements. Each of them becomes confirmed and strengthened by use, and becomes, as it were, specially attached to such objects as frequently evoke it, becomes sensitized to that object or to objects of that

particular kind, so that we cannot perceive or in any way think of that object or kind of object without some stirring of the tendency. And, when a tendency is thus stirred to action by the mere thought of an object that is distant, we feel the stirring within us as an impulse to action ; and, if we cannot at once give rein and vent to the impulse, it becomes what we call a desire (desire that keeps us thinking about that object, thinking how we should like to act in relation to it), and we formulate in thought the goal of our desire.

When a tendency is stirred and we feel the impulse to action, any obstruction, any failure, any suspension of action is disagreeable ; but every advance towards our goal is pleasant ; and attainment brings us the feeling of satisfaction and allays the impulse or desire.

Thwarting and suspension of action may come not only from external circumstances, but also from within. For two or more of these tendencies may be stirred at the same time ; and then, according to their natures, they will co-operate or conflict. Thus, if during a lonely walk we see a crowd of people gathering in a meadow, our curiosity is stirred and at the same time our tendency to seek the company of our fellows, and, with a pleasant glow of excitement, we hasten our steps to join the crowd. If then we find the crowd cruelly baiting a child, an old man, or an animal, the tendency to cherish and protect is stirred by the sight and the cries of the distressed creature ; but, at the moment when we would spring forward, we are held back by fear of the brutal crowd, and we become the seat of a painful conflict of two opposed impulses. For a few moments we watch the brutal scene in painful agitation ; then, as some new stroke of brutality evokes a cry of suffering from the victim, anger surges up within us and we dash in, regardless of consequences, the restraining impulse of fear overcome by the protective impulse reinforced by anger.

Such play of conflicting and co-operating impulses may occur also on the plane of imagination. We may know beforehand that we are about to encounter such a scene as that depicted above ; and we ask ourselves what we shall do. We know we shall fear the brutal crowd ; we know

we shall desire to intervene ; we already feel the anger that comes from thwarting ; but we remain undecided. Then we reflect how our conduct will appear to others. If we have lived wholly in a circle of selfish cynics, we shall know that our intervention would provoke their ridicule, perhaps their scornful censure, and our half-formed resolution to intervene is checked. But, if we have lived among people of decent sensibilities and cultivated tastes, we shall know that they would approve our intervention and hold us in low esteem as a coward if we stood idly by ; then the desire to do the right thing, to be what they would have us be, what would secure their approval and esteem, is stirred ; the new impulse resolves the conflict, puts an end to the deadlock of conflicting impulses, and we know that we shall take action in spite of the fear we cannot wholly repress.

Such is the play of impulses and desires from which all deliberate action issues. Notice that reason may play an important part, but only in so far as, by bringing the problem, the situation or some aspect of it, into a new light, it evokes a new impulse or strengthens one already at work. One may reason that intervention will endanger one's skin, perhaps even one's valuable life, without achieving any good result ; it may show one clearly that a crowd opposed or thwarted becomes an angry mob and that an angry mob is like a wild beast, impervious to all appeals to its better feelings and apt at extremes of violence. Or reason may bring to mind the fact that the example of one man may turn the current of emotion ; that the members of the crowd are not wholly bad or cruel ; that most of them, probably all of them, are kindly beings at heart ; that they only need to have brought home to them the cruel aspect of their sport in order that they may turn from it in disgust and shame. Or reason may point out that, if we save this one poor victim, we may by the same action save many others : for some among the crowd may be led to pause and think and realize the baseness of their sport ; and this may strengthen the workings of the protective impulse within them.

Now consider another remarkable feature of human nature which is of great influence upon our emotional

tendencies, but is not itself such a tendency. Suppose that the cruel scene you anticipate is a bull-fight. You go prepared to condemn and to feel righteous anger ; but the holiday spirit of the gay crowd gets hold of you, infects you. As you expect the advent of the bull, you find yourself participating in the general pleasurable excitement ; at the more tense moments you thrill with the crowd ; you laugh and shout and shudder with them ; you glow with the general admiration and join in the wild applause. And only afterwards, looking back on it all, do you feel astonished and ashamed to have reacted just like one of the common people, like one who has no principles, no refined moral sentiments. You have fallen a victim to a universal trait, one that serves to bind us all together, secures community of feeling and action, and renders mutual comprehension possible, a comprehension far deeper than any we attain by mere interchange of words. This trait, which we may call primitive sympathy, is the foundation of all mutual understanding and of all higher forms of sympathy ; and it consists simply in this—we are so constituted that when those about us display any one of the emotional tendencies, the same tendency is stirred in us by their mere aspect, by the perception of their emotional expressions.

#### STRENGTH OF THE TENDENCIES AND INTENSITY OF THEIR IMPULSES

I wrote just now that reasoning or reflection may lead to increase of intensity of an impulse. We must recognize that when any one of these tendencies is stirred to activity its impulse may vary in intensity through a great range. Consider anger, or curiosity, or fear. One may be moved so slightly that one does not recognize the emotional quality ; and yet, if there are no opposing conditions, the faint impulse determines one's actions. And, as one apprehends the exciting object more completely, the intensity of the impulse may wax, until one is filled with vivid emotion and borne onward by an impulse so strong as to defy one's best effort to control it.

The detection of the fainter stirrings of the tendencies



within us is by no means easy, especially when the situation is such as to evoke simultaneously two or more of them ; for then their emotional qualities are blended in a new quality of emotion which, though allied to each of its constituents, is different from each and altogether peculiar ; as when one we love, say a child, does some stupid naughty thing that hurts him and us, and we are moved at the same time, to anger and tenderness ; perhaps he has fallen in the dust, and we pick him up and brush the dust off him with movements that are half slaps, half caresses, and with the peculiar emotion we call "reproach."

The practice of self-observation and criticism increases greatly our power of recognizing for what they are these fainter stirrings and of detecting in the complex blendings of emotion the constituent qualities ; and such exercise, honestly practised, is an essential step to better self-knowledge. By such exercise, even though it be called by the dreadful name, introspection, we learn to understand our own weaknesses, our emotional susceptibilities, our liabilities ; and, so learning, we may learn also to control and direct them. We learn to know when we are angry, or afraid, though we seem calm, when we are lustful, curious, ashamed, jealous, or self-assertive. Without such learning we can make but little progress in self-knowledge or in self-control.

Take the case of anger. More than any other tendency, more even than fear, does anger spoil our lives, engendering coolness, estrangements, resentments, and marring occasions that might be wholly delightful. And it avails little to check our angry expressions when they are already in full blast. A single word or intonation, a mere trace of facial play, may have done the damage. We must learn to anticipate the expressions of our tendencies by recognizing their faintest incipient stirrings ; not only because in that way we avoid untimely expressions, but also because it is at this incipient stage that we can most effectively exert control. When our anger is in full spate, the best of us may find it impossible to control it ; it seems to carry with it its own justification, and we pour out our angry words or exchange blows with an energy that sweeps the whole organism along in the one channel of expression. But, if we recognize the

first faint stirring of the anger impulse, we may usually succeed in cutting it short ; and that is far better than bottling up and suppressing the full-blown emotion, even if we can succeed in so doing.

This power we have of controlling, suppressing, or cutting short the stirrings of our tendencies is of the utmost importance. The scientific explanation of it is a very subtle and difficult problem which leads into metaphysical depths, such as the question of free will and determinism. We need not enter upon that ; it suffices to know that the power is very real and can be greatly developed by cultivation.

The range of intensity of any one of the impulses is not the same for all men. Just as all men of all races are endowed with the same bodily organs, so that a textbook of human anatomy serves as a dissector's guide equally well in all parts of the earth, save in so far as there are found rare instances of abnormal formations, extra toes, absence of a particular muscle, or malformation or malposition of some organ, so also, there is good reason to believe, all normal men are endowed with the same fundamental tendencies. But, just as there are differences between men in respect of the degrees of spontaneous development of bodily organs and functions, so there are differences between them in respect of the spontaneous degrees of development of these fundamental organs of the mind, the emotional tendencies. Of two men who play the same games and follow the same occupations, one develops large calf-muscles, while in the other, in spite of much exercising, the calves remain slender. The same is true of all our bodily organs and functions. They are given us by the mysterious processes of heredity in a certain degree ; by use and exercise we bring them to full development ; but, with the same amounts of use and exercise, they attain different degrees of development in different men.

The emotional tendencies become fully developed by exercise ; but in each man each tendency, like each bodily organ and function, is given by heredity in a degree that leads to a certain amount of development only with a normal amount of exercise. In one man the anger tendency

develops readily to great strength, so that its impulse is easily evoked and works very powerfully ; while in another it never attains much strength, and in a third seems almost lacking. One man seems to pass through dangers innumerable unmoved by fear, while another shrinks and trembles and cowers at a multitude of slight occasions. In one, curiosity may be so strong as to determine the whole course of his life ; in another, only the most intriguing circumstances provoke a mildly inquiring attitude. In one man the sex tendency works so powerfully that, in spite of all favouring circumstances, it sweeps him on to ruin ; while another is so constituted that he could play the part of St. Anthony without turning a hair.

These facts of the varying composition of our mental foundations raise strange moral problems, the difficulties of which are illustrated by the endless disputes in the courts between lawyers who seek to uphold the majesty of the law, and physicians who attribute criminal actions to "irresistible impulses." From our point of view the important thing is that each of us should learn to take account of these differences and to estimate his own composition, and try to do the same for those, especially children, for whom he is in any sense responsible.

#### VARIOUS DISPOSITIONS .

The word "disposition" is in common usage to denote these peculiarities of original make-up. A man in whom all the emotional tendencies are of moderate strength is properly said to have a well-balanced disposition. And, fortunately, the majority of us are so endowed ; for the well-balanced disposition is the happy disposition, that which lends itself to the successful conduct of life and the development of harmonious character.

Other dispositions are characterized by the undue strength of one or more of the tendencies. Thus we recognize that some men have the timid disposition. They are full of fears. They are unduly cautious. Not only are they liable to fear of great intensity, so that they have the greatest difficulty in controlling it on occasions of real danger, but also

they start and tremble at very slight occasions, a vague noise in the night, a hand laid suddenly on the shoulder, the approach of any large animal ; and their imaginations are largely dominated by fear ; they tremble in anticipation of all sorts of disasters that are not in the least likely to occur.

Other well-recognized dispositions, characterized by excessive strength of some one tendency, are the gluttonous, the lustful, the irascible or pugnacious, the inquisitive, the merry or laughter-loving, the humble, the proud and ambitious or self-assertive, the tender or loving, the sociable or gregarious disposition, and, perhaps less clearly marked, the fastidious, the order-loving, the acquisitive, and the distressful or appealing or dependent dispositions.

Less simple and less easy to understand are those dispositions which diverge from the normal by reason of undue strength of two or more of the emotional tendencies.

Difficult again to recognize with confidence are peculiarities of disposition which consist in unusual weakness of some one or other of the tendencies. Some men seem almost entirely devoid of fear. They go through the most terrible adventures without a tremor ; and afterwards they may say truly that they felt no fear. Yet it is doubtful whether any man was ever born without the fear tendency. If, like a patient of mine, who after a shock of fear frequently asserted that he feared neither God, man, nor devil, a man asserts that fear is unknown to him, he is probably repressing some particular fear, concealing the fact from himself and the world ; or he may have known no fear for many years and have simply forgotten earlier experiences of fear.

Sometimes, contemplating a woman who shows extraordinary indifference to her children, we are tempted to suppose that she was born without any maternal instinct. Some men seem so humble, so meek, so wholly made to be followers, so lacking in proper pride, ambition and even self-respect, that we are inclined to regard them as devoid from birth of all self-assertive tendency. Yet, though the analogy of strange bodily defects, cases of complete absence of some minor organ, gives colour to the view that in rare cases some one of the emotional tendencies may have been left out from the inborn disposition, it is more probable

that this never occurs. For these emotional dispositions are not minor organs ; they are major organs of the species and are of extreme age and stability. More than any other organs or functions they characterize the species, are its essential constituent characters to which all other organs and functions are but servants and instruments.

Nevertheless, defects of disposition in the form of undue weakness of one or other tendency undoubtedly are common. Thus we recognize the heartless or cold disposition which seems hardly ever to be stirred by the tender protective impulse ; the good-natured disposition whose anger is never easily stirred, never violent and never of long duration ; the incurious disposition ; and the cocky disposition of the man who has no humility, no reverence, no deference, no respect, who seems incapable of true admiration and to whom all religion is foreign and unintelligible.

Perhaps the question of complete absence of an emotional tendency from the disposition of some persons confronts us in the most practical form in the case of the sex tendency. Some women, it would seem, have no experience of the stirring of this tendency in themselves ; and such "frigidity" is said to be becoming very common among ourselves, though how any comparative estimate of its frequency can be made is not clear. Such women are apt to regard with disgust every slightest manifestation of sex in others. Though they can hardly make good wives for normal men, yet they sometimes marry and bear children and may be tender devoted mothers ; a fact which shows how untenable is the Freudian dogma that all love springs from the sex tendency. Yet it remains probable that such persons are those in whom a naturally weak sex tendency has remained undeveloped, perhaps starved and repressed by adverse circumstances or nipped in the bud by distressing incidents.

For we have to remember that the sex tendency is peculiar in that its development is normally very slow and gradual ; that it does not normally begin to operate strongly until adolescence is reached, by which time a multitude of influences may have modified the natural course of development, of maturation ; further that, just by reason of its

vast importance in human life, very strong social and personal influences are commonly brought to bear upon this course of development.

The recognition of the weakness or strength of this tendency in ourselves and others is a matter of some importance. I said just now that a person in whom the sex tendency seems lacking or very weak is apt to find all sex manifestations disgusting or, at least, bizarre and repellent. Yet, paradoxical as it may seem, some such persons are apt to talk about sex matters with a freedom that seems to normally sexed men and women shameless and immodest ; and some of them make a cult of conversation of this sort, either flippant or serious ; they find it draws attention to themselves, and to throw a bomb amidst the conventional restraint and decorum of their social circle tickles their vanity.

In general, levity in the attitude towards sex indicates weakness of the sex tendency. One may fairly suspect such weakness in either persons or whole societies where such levity prevails. Where sex is strong, it is treated with seriousness, with gravity, regarded almost with " sacred horror " ; men and women, knowing its tremendous power for good and evil, abstain from playing with it, as they abstain from playing with fire and lightning. The incorrigible flirt is either a thoroughly depraved person, or, more commonly, a girl in whom the sex tendency is naturally weak or not yet developed. In the former case, she is likely to continue to be a flirt ; in the latter case, she is likely to be cured by wider experience and fuller development. And so it remains in each case an open question whether the modern " petting party " is an expression of depravity, or merely one of constitutional weakness or of lack of development among its devotees.

### CHAPTER III

#### MODIFICATIONS OF ORIGINAL DISPOSITION

I HAVE mentioned above that the native tendencies are strengthened by use. It is probably true also that through long disuse they decline in strength.

The strengthening of tendencies through exercise is a fact the recognition of which is of the first importance for parents and all who have to do with children, as well as for self-discipline. The failure to understand and the neglect of the principles implied are responsible for much unhappiness and many distortions of development.

The traditional English system proceeds on the hardening principle. Throw the boy into the water and he will soon get over his fear and learn to swim ;. that is the time-honoured principle of the preparatory and public schools. A little bullying will do him good, and a little fighting will make a man of him. Yes, in many cases the system works out pretty well and turns out the public-school type ; manly, and able to hold its own, to " get on " with others of its own type ; but a little coarse-grained and, when it has to live as an equal among men of different antecedents, intolerant, ill-mannered and unadaptable, apt to make itself disliked. Hence, in the English universities, manners in the true sense of the word are the worst in the whole world, and " public-school man " is a byword in the colonies.

And in too many cases the system does not work at all well. The unusually sensitive boy, the timid boy, the boy of unusual disposition of any kind, is apt under the system to find life a burden and to suffer all kinds of distortion of development, to become a hardened self-seeker, a coward, a toady, a bully, a glutton, a libertine, or one of those obscurely distorted creatures whom we dismiss with a shrug as a crank or an eccentric.

The differences of native disposition raise great difficulties in the way of mass exhortation of every kind, especially such as are addressed to young people, school sermons, moral

addresses to young men, to boys or girls. The preacher perhaps (though seldom, fortunately, in these days) dwells on the terrors of the pit and of the devil, or on the punishments of a jealous God ; and, while his words exert some needed restraining influence upon some of his hearers, they reduce another to a mere pulp of quaking jelly, darken his whole life with fear, or set him upon the purely selfish task of saving his own soul from perdition. Or the preacher declaims against anger in every form, when perhaps one quarter of his hearers greatly need to develop a capacity for well controlled and wisely directed anger.

For we must recognize that all the native tendencies have their proper part to play in a well-developed character. None are wholly good or wholly bad in themselves. "The base and low instincts," of which we so often hear mention in sermons and even in some books on psychology, and which we are exhorted to subdue and cast out, have no existence. They are merely figments of ignorant imagination.

✓ Each one of the native tendencies is a well-spring of energy ; whether it shall work for good or evil is a matter of its direction to noble or low ends, and of wise control of it. Without the tendency of anger, we should know nothing of moral indignation, and our most honourable efforts would lack the reinforcement that anger gives them when we find difficulties in our way. Without fear, we should be incautious, imprudent, utterly rash, without awe, reverence or religion. Without the sex tendency, we should not only be without children and without the family, the great, the indispensable school of character, but also without romance and the greater part of all we call poetry and drama and art in general.

I wrote just now that all the native tendencies are powerful for good and evil. Perhaps one exception should be made. One tendency alone seems so wholly good that we cannot have it in too great strength and hardly need to control its impulse. The tender protective impulse, whose primary biological function is no doubt the care of the child, extends itself to all weak or suffering creatures, to all things that are precious and delicate. It softens our anger, soothes our griefs, heals our wounds, gentles



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all our manners. To its power over men many thousand works of sublime art in every part of Christendom bear testimony. The Buddha made its practice the first rule of life to hundreds of millions of his fellowmen. Jesus Christ gave it predominance among the citizens of an Empire that had lived for a thousand years by the rule of law and war and cruelty, and among the hard-bitten warrior hordes of Europe ; so that the image of the tender Mother and the Babe became the ideal representation of all that is best in human nature. And a great modern philosopher, the cynical Schopenhauer, showed, in the most trenchant of his works,<sup>1</sup> how this same impulse is the essential source of every act that is, in any true sense, a moral act.

And there is one tendency which, though it has its proper part to play in our lives, is yet in the great majority of us stronger than the circumstances of civilized life require, and which, by working too frequently and too strongly, needlessly darkens the lives of very many and plays havoc with not a few. I mean the fear tendency

### CORRECTION OF ILL-BALANCED DISPOSITION

It is the peculiar danger of an ill-balanced disposition that it naturally enters upon a vicious circle. Any one of the tendencies that is unduly strong in the inborn constitution tends to strengthen itself still further by excessive use. There is a certain rivalry and competition among the tendencies ; we may picture them all as drawing upon a common stock of vital energy, an energy which, call it what we will, *élan vital*, or *libido*, or will-to-live, is, however obscure its nature and however recalcitrant to measurement and definition, at once the most important and the most fascinating of all objects of scientific investigation. When, then, one tendency is unduly strong, it grows at the expense of the rest, until, if not checked and corrected by wise guidance and self-discipline, it dominates the whole organism, rendering its possessor a monstrosity, a lop-sided cripple, a miser, a man consumed with pride or ruthless ambition, a grovelling devotee, an inveterate grouser, a lustful libertine,

<sup>1</sup> " The Basis of Morals."

a glutton living for his belly, a buffoon whose one accomplishment is the telling of funny stories, or a moral and physical valetudinarian seeking shelter from every wind and inhibited by fear from every form of healthy activity.

It behoves, then, each one of us to take notice of his own disposition, that he may check and subdue any tendency that seems unduly strong, lest by excess of growth it distort all his development, mar his character and become wholly uncontrollable. And, since it is in the early stages of development that most may be done by way of correction of disposition, it is for parents to study the dispositions of their children and to apply what corrections they may.

The mysterious though very real process of self-control, the practice of recognizing and nipping in the bud inappropriate stirrings of our tendencies, is here of the first importance. The power of exerting such control may be developed in children by wise guidance. The primitive method, now happily no longer generally approved or systematically practised, was to evoke fear as the great inhibiting agent. But it should be unnecessary to resort to fear, except perhaps in rare extreme instances; and, if such resort be deemed necessary, it is far better to evoke fear of physical pain by aid of physical punishment, than to stir up imaginative fears. For imaginative fear is the root of all grovelling superstition, and it plays a far larger rôle in the lives of civilized men than is generally recognized and admitted. For men, and women also, are commonly ashamed of such fear and do not readily speak of it. Yet for very many it is a dark shadow on the whole of life; and in some it plays a chief part in producing mental disorders of very distressing type.

Let us, then, discard the appeal to fear, which at the best is, as it were, an external and brutal method of control, fit only to be applied to animals. Even in the training of animals it is a method of questionable expediency, save in cases of exceptional savagery; the modern animal-trainer has made that discovery, with great benefit to himself and his pupils, and the methods of animal-training have been completely transformed in recent years by the application of less crude psychology. Yet the parallel

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reform in the training of human beings is by no means completed.

How, then, is the rectification or remodelling of native disposition to be effected? There are two very different sides or aspects of the art, neither of which can we afford to neglect. We have to discourage the unduly strong tendencies and to encourage those that are unduly weak. Discouragement may proceed along three distinct lines. All three may, perhaps must necessarily, be initiated by influence of others upon us; but all three should become increasingly matters of self-control and self-direction.

First and simplest, there is avoidance of those circumstances which evoke the unduly strong tendency. The timid child may be shielded from the physical situations that provoke fear; he should not be thrown into the water in order that he may learn to swim; he should not be forced to climb on high places, to sleep alone in the dark, or to face strange animals; he should not be bellowed at when he behaves stupidly or naughtily; he should not be left at the mercy of a bully nor, without most discriminating oversight, at that of a group of average boys. Even more importantly, perhaps, he should be shielded from all persons, especially ignorant servants, who will excite in him imaginative fear; and contact with literature and pictures of the gruesome hobgoblin type may well be kept at a minimum. As he grows up, he will, if he be wise, learn to effect such avoidances for himself. With bold strong children these rules need not be so strictly observed. An element of fear in their games adds zest; and, so long as they are able to master it, in the sense that they carry through their actions, achieve their purposes in spite of fear, they are learning to get the better of it, are acquiring confidence and indifference in face of danger.

The sex tendency, like the fear tendency, is given to most of us, certainly to a very large proportion of men, in a strength which, though it may have been of great service in the cause of natural selection, is excessive for the needs of civilized society. The application of the principle of avoidance is equally obvious and important; it is well

indicated in the old saw—" Evil communications corrupt good manners." Multitudes of children are corrupted at an early age by evil communications in this sphere, in which watchful supervision is a duty that parents cannot delegate. A child left largely to the care of servants runs great risks. Even when little more than an infant in arms many a child has acquired the beginning of a perversion which later has marred its whole life and in many cases has wrecked it. Sometimes it is merely the relatively innocent manipulations of an ignorant girl; sometimes the more sophisticated actions of a person of perverted tendency. Later the child is to some extent defended from such interferences by his power of "telling tales"; but parents have always to remember that children have an astonishing power of secrecy. The most careful and observant parent is always liable to receive astonishing revelations, months and years after the event; and the casual parent remains in blissful ignorance and can throw no light on the case when, perhaps many years later, the physician inquires into the early origins of a neurotic disorder that seems to have fallen out of a blue sky. "Oh! I was always most careful. My maids always came to me with the highest references." "And how about the year so and so?" "Oh! we spent three months in Italy, but the children were well looked after. The younger ones had an excellent governess and Bill was in a boys' camp most highly recommended. So there can't have been anything wrong."

At the school age the chief danger is from children of about the same age; and the damage done may be greater, because the sex tendency is now likely to be more actively at work. The commonest evil is, of course, that the child is inducted by example, or more actively, into the miserable secrets of self-abuse, and that his imagination is polluted by coarse whisperings. These things set up a vicious circle within him; the sex tendency sustains the play of imagination or fantasy, and the imagination in turn inflames the tendency. Then the young creature endowed by nature with a strong sex tendency is launched on the path which leads to libertinage or a hard ascetism, or both in turn, both incompatible with a normal and happy existence.

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But these things may lead also to definite perversions, sexual inversion, kleptomania, and a dozen other distressing conditions with Greek names.

The remedy or preventive widely advocated at the present day is the early instruction in sex. But this is by no means a panacea. It is but a *pis aller* ; at best a partial safeguard ; at worst a positive injury. It may not only destroy the early bloom of innocence, but also lead to just the evils it was designed to prevent. It is not true, as is too commonly asserted and assumed, that all children, until thoroughly enlightened, are constantly consumed with a burning curiosity about sex. Well-born children, carefully and wisely supervised and fortunate enough to grow up wholly in the atmosphere of a truly harmonious family (than which none is rarer) may pass through childhood and adolescence with extremely little trouble or curiosity in the sexual sphere. If they have, as all children should have, an interest in living things and animal pets of their own,<sup>1</sup> they acquire, with the aid of a little judicious answering of their spontaneous questions, an understanding of conception, birth and sex, sufficient to carry them on to an age when they may with advantage read some well-chosen book that will render their knowledge fuller and more explicit. But the thrusting of physiological details on young people who have no taste for them is worse than needless. Many a girl who has had only the vaguest notions of conjugation, conception and parturition until marriage has enlightened her has become a happy wife and mother without any undue shocks or emotional disturbance ; but of course, in such a case, much depends on the wisdom of her husband. In general, I would say, boys require more complete and, perhaps, earlier enlightenment than girls. But each case demands to be treated as unique ; mass action can never be satisfactory in this so delicately individual a matter.

The feeding tendency is another that requires in many

<sup>1</sup> A distinguished philosopher, whose writings on social topics are very widely read, once remarked to me many years ago : "Contact with animals always degrades people." I marked him at once as a crank whose opinions outside his own speciality are of no value ; a judgment which his subsequent career has amply justified.

children the application of the principle of avoidance, if they are not to become gluttons. I don't mean that they are to be left half-starved, but rather just the opposite. Excessive stimulation of the food-appetite must be avoided by keeping them always supplied with an abundant and properly balanced diet. If they are deprived of only one constituent of such a diet, though others be in excess, they will be liable to undue stimulation of this tendency. This rule is especially to be observed in the case of sugar. Sugar is a necessary food-substance and the most easily assimilated and useful source of bodily energy. If children are not given an abundance of sugar with their meals, they will crave for it, and will fall into the way of obtaining it by hook or by crook at all odd times. The same is true of fruit and vegetables. If the child is healthy, let him have his fill; don't worry about his digestion. His digestion will be all the stronger, if he fills himself at times with green apples, or gooseberries, or raw carrots. Whereas, if you restrict him in such things, he will probably learn to break the rules, to steal as well as to crave; which last means undue development by exercise of the food tendency and the preparation for a life of gluttony and perhaps other degradations.

The second principle of discouragement of over-strong tendencies is much more subtle and complicated in its application and development. Its essence is the development of the power to inhibit, to cut short, an impulse at the earliest possible moment when we become aware that it is stirring within us. Mysterious as it may seem, this power may be acquired in very high degree and is of the first importance. If anyone, obsessed by metaphysical presuppositions, doubts the reality of this power, let him study it when he finds himself in a situation that provokes laughter yet calls for its suppression in the interest of good manners. He will find that, although he may not always succeed, he can often nip the impulse as he feels it rising within him; and, even when it has begun to gain expression, he can greatly restrain its intensity or can cut it short.

There are two modes of operation: firstly, inhibition by

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direct action of the will ; secondly, diversion by the intervention of the intellect.

The theory of volition is too technical for discussion here. It must suffice to insist that we all have this power of direct inhibition in rudiment and that all of us can develop it in various degrees by exercise. Such development is necessarily a self-conscious process, and implies the adoption of an ideal of self or character of some sort, however vague, however defective or one-sided, that ideal may be. That is to say, we must have learnt to desire to become something other than we are, better or stronger or more admirable; or even only more capable of getting on, or of making on others an impression of strength or beauty or cleverness or what not. Such self-conscious desire may arise spontaneously in the child or young person ; but its coming may be hastened and its working greatly strengthened by example and discreet guidance and stimulation. Some persons, even clever and highly educated persons, seem to go through life without any such desire ; and, if they are of fortunate disposition and if circumstances are kind to them, they may do pretty well without it. Yet they remain but half-human ; they may have much charm and many virtues, yet in strange and difficult circumstances they are apt to take a wrong road ; and they are very liable to develop faults and flaws of character of all sorts, trivial or grave. Many such persons are inclined to look down upon those in whom they discern any self-conscious desire for improvement and to repudiate any advice tending in that direction. The word " prig " or " priggish " is commonly used by them as an easy and all-sufficient justification of their easy-going attitude. Yet such dismissal of the problem is childish. We cannot be content to despise as prigs such characters as Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, and St. Augustine, or even Marius the Epicurean ; to say nothing of thousands of lesser figures that have adorned the history of Buddhism, of Christianity, of Stoicism. We have to recognize that the finest flowers of character are produced only by self-conscious strivings after self-improvement.

Though direct inhibition is possible and useful and should be practised, he who sets out on the road of self-discipline

does well to recognize that inhibition may generally be achieved more easily and effectively by energetically turning towards and striving for some other goal, whether as a momentary action or as a sustained policy. It was neglect of this principle that sent the anchorites into the desert to struggle alone with the temptations of the flesh ; and he who in the modern world adopts the same mistaken policy is likely to find himself involved in similar agonizing struggles that may prove ineffectual.

Here is a simple practical suggestion. Let him who finds it difficult to get the better of a tendency keep a money-box or a pocket for charity, and let him immediately slip a coin into it every time he detects the stirring of the forbidden tendency. But more important is the development of lines of strong practical interest to which he can turn whenever beset by his too strong tendency, be it only some harmless hobby or game, or, better, some useful work of philanthropy, politics, art or science.

Of course, this direct application of will-power to check the exercise of too strong tendencies requires the guidance of the intellect, in order that by self-criticism we may discover what within us requires such treatment. But the intellect may be applied in another fashion to achieve the same end, the subduing of a too strong tendency. Namely, we may form the habit of looking at the object before us, the situation which stirs in us the undue tendency, in a new light, of turning it about and dwelling upon other aspects than those which first we apprehend. To take a simple example—he who finds himself in danger of gluttony or of becoming a victim of drink may, when confronted by the desire-provoking object, turn it over in his mind and contemplate it as something that threatens to ruin his digestion, to render him coarse and fat, or to redden his nose and cover his face with pimples. Or, if he be troubled by a yearning after light loves, let him think of the other person concerned as a whole personality that has its claims, its possibilities, its need of consideration, rather than merely contemplate the alluring aspect ; let him think of his health, his pocket, his reputation ; let him reflect that the



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brief pleasure is apt to be much lower in quality and intensity than he anticipates, and to be followed by something of the nature of disgust or remorse.

The third great method, apart from the method of fear which we have rejected for general use, is the method of laughter. No one likes to be laughed at, except at those moments when he is consciously playing the fool for the sake of provoking laughter. And laughter, is, as M. Bergson has insisted, a great instrument of social discipline. Let us then use it as such. But it requires to be used with tact and discretion, especially in disciplining young people and those who suffer from irascibility. Sarcasm should be used very sparingly, if at all; and those from whom it runs easily need to keep a tight hand upon it.

It is to be noted that there are two kinds of laughter; laughter which is merely an individual reaction to the ridiculous object or action; and a humorous laughter which embodies the judgment of the world and places its object fairly and squarely in the region of comedy. Laughter of the latter kind is better, is more effective, in two ways: first, humorous laughter is good-humoured and far less offensive, less wounding, than mere laughter at the victim; for in humorous laughter we laugh at ourselves as well as at the victim, we place ourselves on the plane of equality among the comical featherless bipeds that play the human comedy, and thus we maintain the note of sympathy. Whereas mere laughter at the victim sets a gulf between us; the laughter on a high cliff and the victim far below.

Secondly, while mere laughter at the victim may discipline him even more effectually than humorous laughter does, the latter has the great advantage that, being sympathetic, rather than scornful, contemptuous, or merely indifferent, it is highly infectious. All laughter, like all the other emotional impulses, is infectious; but crude laughter at the victim is apt to fail of working its genial infection by reason of the resentment it provokes. Humorous laughter does not evoke this antagonism, and readily infects the victim, leads him to join in and to see the humour of his situation. Now, if we can learn to be humorous, to laugh

at our own failings and weaknesses, we acquire a wonderful means of self-control, for laughter is second only to fear as an inhibitor of other impulses ; and, if we have learnt to see the comic aspect of our anger, of our impulse of fear, of lust, of gluttony, of vanity, of inquisitiveness, of miserliness, we have in laughter a powerful aid to the overcoming of that impulse.

#### THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF WEAK TENDENCIES

The process of correction of ill-balanced disposition needs to be not only one of checking and avoiding ; it must also be one of whipping up, of stimulating and encouraging, unduly weak tendencies that are in danger of atrophy through disuse. Much may be done in this direction by securing occasions and opportunities for the exercise of the tendencies unduly weak. Curiosity may be stimulated, sociability encouraged, ambition excited, humility induced, tender feeling brought to the surface in word and action, laughter and merriment and moral indignation evoked by contagion. Here the principle of contagion of emotional impulses is of the first importance. We are less effective guides to our children if we have by nature or cultivation too little expressiveness, if we hide our emotional stirrings too completely and present to the world a too stolid mask.

#### MANAGEMENT OF ANGER

Having stated the principles involved in the correction of disposition, let us see how they may be applied to the impulse which perhaps stands in most general need of discipline, namely, the anger impulse.

Anger suitably and wisely directed is of great service. We could not afford to dispense with it altogether, if that were possible. Moral indignation is a force of inestimable value in human affairs. The gods, even those of highly moral and refined religions, are capable of anger, anger tempered by mercy and directed according to the principles of justice. Even women, whose power is gentleness and whose glory is tenderness and pity, need, in this imperfect

world, to be capable of anger. The fiery little woman who yet is gentle and tender is secure of our respect ; but she who, like the females of some animal species, seems incapable of anger is in danger of remaining an ineffective figure, however admirable in all other regards. Yet anger mars many lives and probably is responsible for more unhappiness than any other of our tendencies. And the scold has been a figure for contempt and mockery in every age.

It is not so much that the anger tendency is present in too strong a form in the native disposition of most of us. It is rather that the occasions of its exercise are so numerous, its provocatives about us on every hand. For it is the peculiarity of this tendency that it is stirred to action whenever any other tendency meets with obstruction or opposition, whether it comes from other persons, animals, inert things, or from our own clumsiness or stupidity. And, though it vents itself primarily and most naturally on the obstructing object, it very readily spills over and vents itself without discrimination, seeking, by preference, a responsive victim, hence most commonly a human one. We may curse the blustering breeze that blows our papers about the room ; we may even, like the savage who beats his ineffective idol, hurl upon the floor the spluttering pen or the worn wrench that slips and slips. But the burst of "temper" finds little satisfaction from such senseless expressions ; it finds full satisfaction only when we see others bow before the storm and hasten to do our will.

These satisfactions of anger are a further ground of the need for discipline ; for anger is subject to the general law that every form of activity that brings satisfaction recurs the more readily. And the satisfactions of anger are very real and intense, doubly intense, because, when anger overcomes the obstacle and gains its end, the original impulse, obstruction of which generated the anger, finds a fair way before it.

and a grievous trial to our life's partner ; anger uncontrolled has been the beginning of the end of countless happy marriages, for, as George Eliot remarks : " Very slight things make epochs in married life ; " and again : " Hard speech between those who have loved is hideous in the memory, like the sight of greatness and beauty sunk into vice and rags." Not only does undue irascibility make us a burden to our friends, but also it estranges them, it involves us in endless disputes, prompts us to insist insanely on rights that are of no value, and fills us only too often with painful regret.

| " And to be wroth with one we love  
| Doth work like madness in the brain."

That remark of the poet Coleridge is true in general, whether our anger was justified or unjustifiable, as most of us know only too well ; in the latter case, our pain is complicated by remorse, the most painful of all emotions.

The person of pugnacious disposition who neglects to cultivate control of this tendency is, then (especially if outward circumstances, such as a position of authority, unwise parents, or a meek long-suffering spouse, favour its exercise) in danger of becoming a nuisance to himself and to everybody about him. He cannot enjoy a holiday abroad, because the manners and customs of the natives irritate him every few minutes ; a game of golf is a round of curses ; and even a quiet half-hour with his favourite newspaper is filled with outbursts of indignation. If his constitution is strong enough to stand the excessive wear and tear and he lives to be an old man, he seems to live by and for anger ; and his death by apoplectic stroke relieves his relatives of an intolerable burden.<sup>1</sup>

The principle of avoidance is to be observed here as with other tendencies that are unduly strong, but is peculiarly difficult to apply. The boy of pugnacious or irascible disposition learns only too readily that a display of violence frequently enables him to attain his goal and all the satisfactions of success. He begins by tyrannizing over his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the squire in Sheila Kaye Smith's story " The End of the House of Alard."

mother and his brothers and sisters, and goes on to fighting his school-mates. If these procedures are successful, he soon learns that a mere demonstration in force commonly suffices; and he acquires the habit of breaking out into perfectly unrestrained anger at the slightest check or opposition to his activities. If he continues to be successful by reason of his status, perhaps as eldest son and heir, or by reason of his own qualities masterfully displayed and a position rightfully attained, he becomes one of those domineering men, who, even though possessed of a kind heart and preserved by it from falling to the level of the merely brutal bully, is a terror to his family and his dependants and a trial to his equals, by reason of his "peppery temper."

Such a boy presents a most difficult problem to his parents. The peculiar difficulty in applying the principle of avoidance is this: If, when he shows anger, we oppose him, we make him more angry; but, if we do not stand up to him and oppose him, his anger enables him to gain his end and brings him the satisfaction of success, and the tendency is strengthened. What, then, is to be done? We can avoid returning blow for blow. If we allow ourselves an angry retort to his angry expression, we intensify his anger by sympathetic reaction or resonance. Further, we can lay down very clear and inflexible rules infraction of which shall automatically bring penalties (but let the rules be well considered and as few as may be) so that, instead of finding himself opposed by an arbitrary unpredictable will, sometimes yielding, sometimes angrily resisting, he knows beforehand what he will be up against if he should rebel. We can remember that "a soft answer turneth away wrath." We can avoid those absurd disputes (constantly recurring in so many families) in which neither party is in the right and neither can prove his point. Especially futile are the disputes which arise over different recollections of the same event. "Do you remember that old black hat she was wearing?" "Yes, perfectly well, but it wasn't black, it was brown." "No, it was black, I can see the whole scene as clear as a picture." "Well, I am perfectly certain it was brown!" "You can say so if you like, but that won't alter the fact. I have a particularly good

memory for colours." "Well, you needn't get mad about it, anyway!" Each retort increases the anger of the other party and so, out of a clear sky, has come a ridiculous quarrel; for the hat was blue, or perhaps blackish-brown. Children (and adults) should learn that no memory is infallible; not even your own. If you are willing to concede that you may be in error and that, anyway, it is a matter of absolutely no consequence, and if you frankly admit your error when the evidence goes against you, your pugnacious son may learn to achieve the same plane of philosophic calm.

Fussing and fuming irritates others by infection, even when our anger is not directed to them; therefore don't indulge in it. Shun the company of irritable and irritating people, and try to arrange similar avoidance for the young sufferer.

The principle of direct inhibition is to be applied to ourselves and encouraged in the young, and by long practice great efficiency may be attained. The intervention of the intellect may also be effectively cultivated. We may learn to view our little tantrums as what they are, and, at the moment of impending anger, to look up at the starlit spaces of the universe. Any intellectual contemplation of our emotions detaches us in some degree from them, weakens their power over us; even if it be merely the contemplation of scientific curiosity. But in relation to anger we need especially, not only to stand off and look at ourselves as objectively as possible, but also to cultivate the art of looking at things from the other fellow's point of view, of seeing things in binocular perspective; we need to ask ourselves: "Is it worth while? Can't I be just as happy without it? Is it really necessary to put him in his proper place and make him defer to me?"

To clever quick-brained persons the stupidities of other people are apt to be very irritating. Let them remind themselves on every such occasion that the other fellow's stupidity is not his fault but rather his misfortune; and that their own quick cleverness is a gift from the gods which entitles them to no exemptions but rather lays special obligations upon them, obligations of helpfulness, of tolerance and of service.

Laughter also may be of great assistance. Of course it may be so used as to drive the irascible one to frenzy ; but that is always a misuse. But we can help him to see that he is making himself ridiculous ; and we can learn, and help him to learn, to take the humorous attitude towards our weaknesses, our slips, our failures ; here, if anywhere, the opposite funny story is in place.

## REPRESSION

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The reader may have had in mind, as he has read the foregoing pages, various solemn warnings about the evils of "repression." Here, he may say, is a writer who presumes to offer advice on the conduct of life, and he seems to ignore the New Psychology and its most explicit teaching. Unfortunately, much vague acquaintance with the doctrines of Professor Freud is widely spread, and grossly false deductions from them are widely current and countenanced in not a few books. Of all such misinterpretations that of the dangers and evil consequences of "repression" is most widely accepted, just because it seems to give licence to unrestrained indulgence, to excuse us from all efforts at self-control. And so we hear much nonsense about living out our nature, and about free self-expression and about our rights, and especially women's rights, to happiness and experience and what not ; and much scornful comment on old-fashioned conventions and restraints.

I would assure the reader that I have done my best to assimilate all that is sound in the Freudian teachings and have wrestled manfully with the facts and the theory of repression.<sup>1</sup> And I would also assure him that neither Professor Freud nor any other judicious psycho-analyst countenances the popular deductions to which I refer. They recognize rather that (to put it in the epigrammatic form of one such psycho-analyst) repression is civilization. Without repression in the wide and general sense of the word, without restraint, without self-control, without

<sup>1</sup> If he thinks my views on this difficult topic may interest him, he may turn to my "Outline of Abnormal Psychology" where he will find a pretty full discussion.

deliberate choice between good and evil, between the greater and the lesser good, without laws and without conventions, there can be nothing but chaos and savagery in the worst sense, there can be none of the finer things of life, not even such as the better kind of savage attains to.

✓ Repression in the technical sense, the repression that undermines our self-control and threatens the integrity of our personality, is that which consists in disguising from ourselves the nature of our emotional stirrings and impulses. If we pretend to ourselves that we are not angry; if we refuse to recognize that we are jealous, or envious, or lusting, or disappointed, or afraid, when these tendencies are really at work in us, then we are practising repression in the harmful sense. Repression of that kind is the opposite of frank self-criticism and honest self-control.

I would even put in a word for the harmless necessary "damn!" An expletive relieves tension and does no harm. But even there we must exercise due restraint. If we rap out the naughty word on the slightest provocation regardless of all convention, it becomes merely a bad habit and loses its relieving virtue. For its virtue arises from its being a momentary and successful defiance of an accepted convention.

And, in spite of all I have written about the control of anger, I recognize that a sharp word of reproof has its place in our armamentarium and its rôle in discipline. Occasions may arise when we ought to be angry, even very angry, and to show it. And if, after consideration, we decide that we have to apply physical punishment to a child, then let us do it in hot blood rather than in cold; the child will understand the better and will forgive us.

What I have said of the control of emotional tendencies is, then, no plea for the stoic ideal of impassivity, freedom from all emotion. That is an impossible ideal for any man, and a weakening one for those who have work to do in this rough-and-tumble world; carried to its logical extreme it means Nirvana, the state where all desire, all striving, all activity cease; it is not easy to distinguish it from death.



## CHAPTER IV

### OTHER FACTORS OF HUMAN NATURE

#### TEMPERAMENT AND TEMPER

**T**EMPERAMENT, like disposition, with which in common speech it is hopelessly confused, is in the main inborn. It also is subject to modification in the course of life; in respect of it also individuals differ widely, and there are inborn temperaments that are wholly happy or fortunate and others which, if it were possible, we would like to modify. As with disposition, it is the extremer forms of temperament that are apt to give trouble and which would be improved by being brought nearer to the happy mean.

What, then, is temperament? We may broadly define it as the resultant of all the chemical influences of the body upon our mental life. That definition implies, of course, a theory of temperament; but one which is pretty well founded. The theory is as old as science, for it comes down to us from the ancient Greeks; but it is only in very recent years that vague speculation on the problem has begun to give way to knowledge. We are only at the beginning of such knowledge; yet a few points are well established. We know that we have bodily organs the chemistry of which profoundly affects our temperament; and medical science can already intervene effectively to rectify some departures from the normal. Since this is a matter for physicians, I will not dwell upon it further than to illustrate the fact that to be aware of these possibilities is important for our self-direction, but still more so for all who are responsible for children: for, when there is grave abnormality of these factors of temperament, we need to seek medical advice. Medical treatment may quickly remedy a defect, or an excess, against which we might struggle long and vainly with the methods of self-control and discipline.

The most striking and best understood of these factors

is, perhaps, the secretion of the thyroid gland, the small mass of tissue which lies beside the windpipe and which in women plays a part in giving to the neck its beautiful contours. Any person in whom the secretion of this gland is insufficient is abnormally sluggish in mind and body ; and a child, born with or developing this defect, ceases to develop normally ; its growth of both mind and body is slow, and in extreme cases the child remains a dwarf in both respects, a dwarf idiot. Fortunately, the defect can be remedied, if taken in good time, by adding the essential chemical substance to the food of the patient.

On the other hand, when, as not infrequently happens, the chemical activity of this gland becomes excessive, the processes of mind and body are hurried. The patient becomes restless, agitated, unduly excitable and emotional, and tends to wear himself to a state of emaciation. This, again, is a condition in face of which medical science is not without resources.

There are other similar factors which are known to exert no less profound influences. Faced with these facts, many a layman is inclined to say : " How horrible ! We are the sport of wretched chemical processes within us over which we have no control." To which the only answer is, that no rebelling against the facts will abolish them ; our only course is to try to understand them and thereby to gain control of them in increasing measure. It is amusing to find that a philosopher who will discourse learnedly on the ancients' theory of the temperaments and the four humours of the body may turn away in disgust and moral indignation when confronted with modern knowledge of the subject and the modern developments of the old theory. Yet such is the weakness of poor human nature, even in some philosophers.

A distinction between temperaments that is perhaps of the greatest practical importance from our point of view, that of self-knowledge and the conduct of life, is that between the introverted and the extroverted temperament. Some vague acquaintance with this distinction has recently become widely spread, and a few words about it will be in order.

In respect of the factor we are considering, all temperaments might be ranged in a scale, running from the extreme of introversion to the extreme of extroversion; and fortunately, perhaps, the great majority of men and women would stand in the middle part of such a scale; in other words, they are neither markedly introvert nor extrovert, but incline only a little to one side or the other of the happy mean, the mid-point of the scale.

The extreme or well-marked extrovert is a person whose inner movements, especially all emotional stirrings, at once find outward expression with extreme facility. He wears his heart upon his sleeve. Not only do his emotions show vividly on his face, but also he gesticulates naturally and talks freely and easily, even on topics that to other people are difficult, that seem to them almost improper, topics such as sex, religion, beauty, honour, truth, and other private affairs. He, therefore, readily gets into touch with others, quickly sets up emotional *rapprochement* with others like himself; and, if in other respects he is ordinarily well endowed, he quickly becomes in any circle "hail-fellow, well met."

The extreme introvert, at the opposite end of the scale, does not readily give expression to his emotions. He seems to be so constituted that the energies of his emotional stirrings, rather than flow outwards in activation of his muscles, turn inwards, prompting and sustaining reflection.

The extrovert is, then, by nature a man of action; the introvert a man of thought. The former reflects only when he is driven to it by the impossibility of attaining his goals without reflection. To the latter reflection is so natural that he is in danger of failing to act at all. The extrovert, through lack of reflection, is apt to remain naïve, that is to say, ignorant of himself and the motives of his actions. The introvert almost inevitably becomes self-conscious in a high degree, can hardly fail to attain some knowledge of himself, however lacking in fullness and accuracy; he is apt to find his self-consciousness a burden, and to be handicapped in practical affairs by his tendency to deliberate, to muse and brood, when he should be up and doing.

Like disposition and like other temperamental factors, each man's position in the introvert-extrovert scale seems

to be in the main a matter of hereditary constitution, and susceptible of being altered by circumstance and training only in modest degree. Temperament seems in fact to be less modifiable by training than disposition. In the main, then, understanding of temperament in ourselves and others is useful, not that we may modify it, but that we may take due account of it in charting the course of life for ourselves and others, and in marking upon the chart the snags and shoals we must avoid, the fairways in which we may hope to sail smoothly.

Here again we see how impossible it is to adapt exhortation or advice to the mass, how each individual has his own peculiar problems requiring some unique course of adjustment of personality to circumstance. It is unnecessary to exhort the extrovert to be up and doing; he needs rather to learn to reflect before acting, to be a little more restrained and self-consciously reflective. It profits little to exhort the introvert to look before he leaps; his weakness is that he naturally tends to look so long that he never leaps at all.

The extrovert in love will write sonnets to his mistress's eyebrow and recite them all about the town; and he will climb to her balcony without stopping to calculate the consequences. The introvert will find it difficult to pronounce her name; and, if he writes any sonnet to her, his executors may be astonished to find it among the private papers of a man who was supposed to be a woman-hater.

If crossed or insulted, the extrovert will rap out strong words or a blow, or pull out his weapon in a flash; while the introvert may brood long and silently on the injury, may sulk in his tent, tortured by the conflict of incompatible tendencies within him.

The faults of the extrovert are, then, the faults of hasty, rash, ill-considered action; and, if he is of ill-balanced disposition, if in him some one tendency is unduly strong, he will have the more difficulty in keeping it in check. He is apt to remain naïve, ignorant of his real motives, never questioning the essential rightness of his actions. When difficulties become too great for his powers of adjustment, he is liable to nervous breakdown of the type called hysterical; he is disabled by some mysterious loss of control, loss

of memory, loss of sensation or of movement or of both in one or more limbs, loss of voice or vision or hearing, partial or complete ; in spite of which (even in virtue of which, since it may solve his problem by relieving him of obligation and full responsibility) he may remain bright and in good touch with his surroundings.

The faults of the introvert are moodiness (for a mood is the work of an incompletely expressed emotion), sulkiness, excessive reserve and a lack of responsiveness, which keep him shut up in himself, in spite perhaps of strong desire for human contact; a tendency to day-dreaming and fantasy-formation, which may go so far as to make the world of his imagination more real to him than the outer world. When he encounters serious difficulties, he is apt to be tortured by internal conflict that shuts him off still more completely from his fellows.

#### PECULIARITIES OF TEMPER

Under the head of temperament common speech includes certain peculiarities of constitution which, in strictly scientific analysis, are best set apart under the heading of temper. In the nursery we commonly use the word "temper" to denote anger or an angry mood ; but that is a very narrow colloquial usage. Those who use language with discrimination distinguish varieties of temper by appropriate adjectives; they speak of a man of ardent temper, of sluggish, persevering or steadfast or constant, fickle or unstable, hopeful, despondent, stolid or mercurial temper. And such peculiarities of temper are enduring qualities; they seem to be inborn, of the very fibre of our constitution and little modifiable by circumstances and training. Nevertheless, for the purpose of self-control and wise guidance, it is desirable to take note of such peculiarities, in order that we may understand our requirements and apply as best we may the principle of compensation.

A man's peculiar temper seems to express qualities common to all his emotional tendencies. If a man is hopeful or optimistic in one type of situation, he is likely to show the same quality of temper in others. If he is

steadfast in love, he is likely to be steadfast in hatred and revenge and ambition ; if he is fickle though ardent in his affections, he is likely to be inconstant and variable in his sports, his studies, his professional pursuits. The man of mercurial temper is easily and strongly affected by pleasure and pain, by success and failure, or by the mere prospect of success and of failure ; slight changes of circumstance and prospect send him rushing up or down the scale of the derived emotions, from confidence and hope to despondency and despair, no matter what be the tendencies at work in him, whether rivalry, ambition, love, revenge or any other.<sup>1</sup> The man of stolid temper is little subject to these alternations ; yet, though stolid, he may be either ardent or cool, steadfast or fickle, steadily hopeful or steadily despondent.

Temper is very little susceptible of modification by any measures we can take ; but we can learn to recognize its varieties in ourselves and others and to make due allowance for them in passing judgment on the past and laying our plans for the future.

<sup>1</sup> For some account of the derived emotions (confidence, hope, anxiety, despondency, despair, regret, sorrow and remorse) I must refer the reader to my "Outline of Psychology."

## CHAPTER V

### CHARACTER AND WILL

“OF all the tasks which are set before man in life, the education and management of his character is the most important, and, in order that it should be successfully performed, it is necessary that he should make a calm and careful survey of his own tendencies, unblinded either by the self-deception which conceals errors and magnifies excellencies, or by the indiscriminate pessimism which refuses to recognize his powers for good. He must avoid the fatalism which would persuade him that he has no power over his nature, and he must also clearly recognize that this power is not unlimited” (W. E. H. Lecky)

Up to this point we have been discussing the raw materials of character, namely, disposition, temperament and temper. Now we must consider what we mean by “character,” and how character is formed. For character is not something given in our inborn constitution; it is something that we gradually acquire, each in our degree. Sometimes we speak of a man as lacking in character, and of another we say that he is a “character.” But it is more useful and correct to recognize that we all develop character in some degree, and of some sort, whether good or bad, strong or weak, refined or coarse-grained. And it is in the development of character, a process which may and should continue throughout our lives, that we find the fullest scope for guidance and self-direction.

In the early years of life, development is most rapid and character, being still plastic, is most susceptible to guidance. We are often told that the first years of life are all-important for education; and sometimes that statement is accepted as justification for attempts to force on the intellectual development of the child. Many parents, ambitious for their child, wishing him to shine in the world, make this grave error. They stimulate the young child’s mental

activity in all conceivable ways. Before he has become fluent in his native tongue, they set about to make him bilingual; as soon as he has made a little progress in one foreign language, they begin to force a second upon him; and then, perhaps, Latin and Greek are added to French and German. All this is folly. If the child responds to the forcing process, it is proof that he does not need it; if he does not respond, because he cannot, he probably receives a discouragement and a distaste for things of the mind which may abide with him through life. Let parents inclined to any such course make two lists, one of the names of intellectual giants who commanded only their native tongue, and another of similar men who were multilingual; they will find the second list very short in comparison with the other. It is impossible to prove the case, but I am strongly disposed to believe that the learning of a second and, still more, of a third language, before a pretty good mastery of the native tongue has been acquired, is prejudicial to intellectual development and even to correct and forcible usage of language. And there can be no doubt that many children, subjected to the forcing process, suffer from it seriously in nervous instability and in impaired bodily vigour and development. We ought, then, to be very sure that the process is likely to result in some substantial intellectual gain, before we subject a child to any such risks.

The truth seems to be that the degree of a man's intelligence and the retentiveness of his memory are inborn qualities which cannot be appreciably added to by any process of forcing. Of course, like all functions, if they are to develop normally they need to be exercised; but the ordinary course of family life, especially in a family of intellectual tastes and interests, will provide sufficient stimulus and exercise. The chief needs to be cared for here are, first, that the child shall be given scope to develop the interests natural to the successive stages of unfolding tendencies; secondly, that he shall have suitable sympathetic companionship. A little stimulating of particular interests may be in order; but let there be no forcing and driving. At the best we shall produce only a learned



pedant, and we may bring on a catastrophe—bodily or mental breakdown. The kind of child that is most likely to lend himself to the forcing process is just the kind most likely to fall a victim to that dread disorder of early life which medical men know as *dementia præcox*, a disorder which has wrecked the life of many a youth of brilliant promise.

The statement that the earliest years are the all-important years is true of the moulding of disposition and the formation of character, rather than of the intellectual development. While the infant is still in the cradle, the foundations of his character are being laid and a multitude of influences are at work. It is for the parents to see to it that these influences shall be as far as possible favourable. And, since at this stage and throughout the years of childhood these influences come almost exclusively by way of personal contact, the main thing is to secure that the persons in contact with the child are persons of happy constitution and admirable character. For the processes of character formation, though they are infinitely subtle, may without serious error be regarded as in the main, in the early stages at least, a process of absorption from surrounding persons.

We sometimes hear mothers, especially clever intellectual women, say "The child doesn't need me at this stage; there is nothing I can do for it that cannot be done equally well by a well-trained nurse." And they propose to leave it to hired hands until it shall be old enough to be made the victim of the process of intellect-forcing. It is a profound error; one which has brought severe penalties in countless instances. (If parents believe in themselves, if they are well-fitted to be parents, then the greatest thing they can do for their young children is to give them their constant companionship; for in that way they can give what no wealth can buy or vicariously supply, the influences that build, well and truly, the foundations of a happy and effective life, the foundations of character.

Consider the influence of nursing at the mother's breast. "What difference *can* it make whether the infant gets its milk in the old-fashioned animal way, or from a bottle,

prepared by the hand of one trained in all the principles of modern hygiene? If there is any difference, is it not all in favour of the bottle?" Thus the modern woman is apt to argue; powerfully biased in favour of that view by considerations of convenience, of freedom to carry on her other important duties, her social obligations, her professional activities, perhaps her lectures on child-hygiene and home-management.<sup>1</sup> And, unfortunately, this prime duty of the mother, which many modern women are physically incapable of discharging (either because of constitutional defect or more frequently by reason of their hectic mode of life) has been made to seem something fraught with awful consequences by the now so popular Freudian doctrine and its central dogma of the Œdipus complex. This last is very obscure and problematic. I have criticized it in detail elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Here I must be content to point out, first, that Professor Freud himself has recently recanted in this matter, and no longer makes on behalf of this dogma the extravagant claims still maintained for it by some of his disciples; (secondly, that the conception of this complex as a universal factor in human life is founded on the central error of Freudianism, namely, the identification of all love with the working of the sex tendency. If we recognize, as we must, that the central and essential tendency of all love is, not the sex tendency, but the tender protective tendency whose primary function is the care of the infant, then we may see that the theory of the Œdipus complex contains a profound truth in a gravely distorted form, the truth, namely, that the nursing of the infant by the mother lays the foundation of all the child's later love for her, and brings into activity, by sympathetic induction, the infant's capacity for tenderness, prepares it for all later developments of character in which the tender impulse plays a central rôle, all sentiments of love, pity and reverence, all gentleness and considerateness, all good manners and good morals.

I do not assert that an infant deprived of this first great

<sup>1</sup> I have known highly intelligent women grossly neglect their children in order to attend series of lectures or discussions on child-management.

<sup>2</sup> "Outline of Abnormal Psychology."

gift can never develop any such sentiments or display such qualities; I insist merely that all that side of its character is apt to be starved and poorly developed. I suggest that a whole nation brought up on the bottle would show a coarsening of manners, a coldness and hardness in all relations, a lack of the refining influence of tender feeling, the successful cult of which has been a chief service of Christianity to the world. I suggest that the infant's bottle might be made the object of national prohibition with more good reason than the father's.

There are parents nowadays who, terrified by the teaching of Freudian physicians or by the revelations of modern hygiene as to the risks of microbic infection, not only refuse to allow any other persons to kiss their children (a not unreasonable prohibition and one which is well-advised as regards strangers) but also lay down the same rule for themselves. That is to carry to an extravagant and hurtful excess a principle which is important and sound enough to require mention at this point. Though the infant receives essential benefits from the mother's tender caresses, there soon comes a time when a certain restraint should be used in all such matters. Each individual's body is a temple that should not be desecrated; and the excessive fondling and caressing of growing children in which some parents indulge themselves is a desecration. The normal child, wisely brought up, manifests at an early date a reserve and bodily modesty which should be respected. When we see a young man lounging in public with his arm around his mother's waist, or a maiden sitting on her father's lap, we may feel pretty sure that the parents have failed to observe a due restraint.

As the infant acquires his love for his mother by the subtle processes of emotional contagion, so he acquires much else in the way of emotional reactions and attitudes in the first months and years of life. If the atmosphere of the family is what it should be, the child of well-balanced disposition needs little in the way of admonition and correction. The budding emotions and sentiments are moulded and encouraged along the right lines by absorption from

the atmosphere about him. But if there are ugly things in that atmosphere, if the parents are such poor creatures that they are jealous of one another in respect of their children's affection, if they are quarrelsome, or untruthful, or mean, or greedy, or egotistical, if their relations to one another are in any way lacking in harmony and mutual respect, then, no matter how carefully they may try to hide these things, the child will suffer some distortion of development; in the worse cases there will be sown in him the seeds of future unhappiness and, not seldom, the beginnings of neurotic troubles that at any later period of strain may break out into manifest symptoms: stuttering, phobias, obsessions, perversions of all kinds, and the whole array of hysterical defects and neurasthenic sufferings. In many a family, neurotic disorders breaking out in successive generations are attributed to hereditary constitutional defect, when in reality they are due to lack of propitious family atmosphere, a lack which propagates itself from generation to generation in the form of defects of character.

The main thing for the child's character-development is, then, that the parents shall be the right sort of people and in right relations to one another and to the children, and that the children shall learn to love, respect and admire their parents. According to the old-fashioned convention, children love and respect their parents simply because the parents are their parents, or because it is their duty so to do. But love and respect for particular persons are sentiments that are acquired. They are not inborn, they have to be gradually built up; and, once formed, they have to be fed and strengthened, if they are not to die away again. Love, like every other sentiment, is not a mere emotion of the moment; it is a living thing and, like every other living thing, it gradually takes shape and organization; it never stands still, quite unchanging; it is constantly growing stronger or richer or fading away. And it is only too true that, at any stage of its life-history, love may be injured and deformed; it may receive such injuries that its growth is completely arrested and converted into a process of decay.

The mother, under normally happy circumstances has learnt to love her child before it was born. With the father

the growth is less inevitable and usually slower. With the child it is still less inevitable and still more gradual. Parents have to earn the love of their children; and, if they would retain it, they must assiduously cultivate it, not by ostentatious display, but by deserving it. If all parents made the care of their children their first responsibility, giving it precedence over all others, if they constantly held the love of their children (after their love for one another) as their chiefest value, there would be far fewer who, in middle life and old age, find themselves lonely and deserted or merely tolerated from a sense of duty. At the present time it is widely known that the so-called New Psychology (I mean that of the psycho-analytic schools) teaches that a prime duty and a prime need of the child is to break away from the parents' influence: that only by so doing can the child become a fully developed personality. I venture to characterize this as a most unfortunate and ill-founded dogma. It is ill-founded: for it is a deduction from the theory that the Œdipus complex plays a part in the lives of all normal people, a theory which is itself founded on an error. And it is unfortunate: because the spread of this doctrine coincides in time with a general weakening of family ties, and an increasing tendency on the part of young people to throw off all allegiance, all deference, even all consideration, for their parents.

Even if it were true that all, or very many, sons were bound to their mothers, and daughters to their fathers, in the way which the theory of the Œdipus complex asserts, so that they have to break these terrible bonds before they can hope to marry satisfactorily, it would be, perhaps, in this age of pressure of population, an excellent thing that a considerable number of young people should remain bound to the parents. For, whatever theory we may hold, we cannot deny that the love of a son for a mother, or of a daughter for her father, in their declining years is often a very beautiful thing, productive of much that enriches both lives and without which both might remain cold, selfish and cheerless. I shall have more to say on this head in a later chapter; here we are concerned with general principles only.

The young child, then, absorbs his character unwittingly

from those about him ; the raw materials, those inborn tendencies we have discussed in a previous chapter, become centred upon, attached to, those persons and things which repeatedly evoke them ; thus are formed the enduring emotional habits or attitudes we call sentiments, sentiments of liking or disliking, love or hate, respect, admiration, gratitude, fear, or loathing ; and all this goes on inevitably, guided by and modelled upon the parental example. If the example is good, precept and admonition, correction and punishment are hardly needed in the early years, at least by children of well-balanced disposition and average temperament.

In late childhood and adolescence self-consciousness grows richer and the child begins to form critical judgments about himself and others ; and, as he begins to conceive the various moral qualities, such things as courage, kindness, justice, generosity, honesty and their opposites, he forms sentiments of liking and disliking for them also ; and he begins to desire for himself those qualities he likes and admires, and to desire to be free from those that he has learnt to regard with contempt and scorn. Still in the main the process goes on under the influence of those with whom he is in personal contact ; (and it continues to be of the first importance that those with whom he is most closely in contact shall be persons who are of good character and are capable of winning his respect and admiration.)

For those children who early take to books, only less important than the personalities of those with whom he is in daily touch are the authors of the books he reads : for they also reveal themselves in their writings, even if they write only fairy tales and stories of adventure and other fiction ; and, aided by the prestige of authorship and world-wide reputation, they may surpass in the degree of their influence all the more familiar figures of the household, the school and the church.

At this stage of rapidly increasing self-consciousness, a little well-considered advice or deliberate guidance is in order ; but, if it comes indirectly as expressions of opinion and emotion upon the personalities, the qualities, the actions

in which the child is interested, it will take effect upon him more surely than if it is given in the form of direct advice or admonition, mere "pie-jaw": and, in either case, it will take effect only when it comes from persons who have already gained his respect or admiration. In this connexion official position as parent, guardian, schoolmaster, pastor, bishop, or what not, is of little or no assistance. As regards the parent, the tutor, and the pastor, the old adage "familiarity breeds contempt" (at least, indifference) holds good, unless the person in question displays qualities that appeal to the child. Reputation with the world outside may have some slight weight for older children, but in the main it avails little.

Imagine now a child or young person who, having been well-born and fortunate in the circumstances of his life, especially in respect of family influences, has acquired all such sentiments for persons and things as we could desire for him. He has learnt to love and admire his parents and a few other people of the right sort; he loves his home and his country; he admires with discrimination the admirable qualities of conduct and character; he dislikes and despises those which by common consent are mean and despicable. What more does he need in order to become a fine character?

The sentiments he has acquired are essential ingredients of fine character; they are more than the raw materials, the tendencies of his disposition and the qualities of temperament and temper with which nature has endowed him. They are the product of many years of growth and organization. If we seek to clarify our conception of this process of character-building by aid of some analogy, we can find none in the mechanical world; but we can imagine a closely analogous process in the organization of some large group of men.

Imagine that you desire to bring into existence a vast industrial or commercial concern. You assemble skilled workers of each kind required, clerks, stenographers, packers, sorters, buyers, sellers, advertisers, etc., you group them in as many special departments, and you organize each department so that it can do its work in a highly efficient manner.

You have then an elaborate organization analogous to the character of the child at the stage we are considering. Such an organization is obviously incomplete in one most essential respect. It is not yet a unity; it is not integrated: for it lacks a head. Without integration, without a co-ordinating head, it may function pretty well under fortunate circumstances; but it will be very liable to get out of order, to become unbalanced; one department is unnecessarily large and active, another is under-staffed or sluggish, and there are no means of preventing or correcting such defects and disorders.

What is needed is a head, a president, a managing director, or a small governing board, whose function it shall be to overlook the whole, to define exactly its aims, its purposes, perhaps to enlarge and modify them; to estimate critically the strength of all the departments; to secure due balance of function between them; to see that each part of the organization is duly subordinated to the purpose of the whole and contributing its proper share to the efficient pursuit of that purpose. Only under such co-ordinating direction does the organization become integrated to a true unity, capable of maintaining the highest efficiency under adverse and changing circumstances.

The individual whose character has developed to the point defined above is like the business-organization of many departments without a head, or with but a most inadequate president, one having little knowledge of his departments, little authority over them and no well-defined goal or purpose, no definite conception, no ideal, of what his organization should be and should do. Many persons remain throughout life at this stage, in this state of only partially developed character. Such a one may lead a very fairly satisfactory existence; in fact, so long as circumstances are entirely favourable, he may live very happily and successfully. (But he has little power of adaptation to new and especially to adverse circumstances; he is liable to develop gross faults of character; he does not know how to bring up his reserves of energy and marshal them in the fighting line; in short, he is lacking in will-power.) Will or will-power is the expression of fully developed character; it is character in action.



A man or woman remaining in this stage may display great energy and steadfastness along certain lines of action. For example, a woman who has a strong maternal instinct and great love for her children may work for them in a sustained and heroic fashion, her whole life being dominated by this one master-sentiment or passion. But she may be a very unwise mother ; there will be something fanatic and uncontrolled in all her actions, and total lack of sense of proportion and of relative values. In the service of her beloved children she will, if need be, lie, rob, slander and murder without a qualm ; everything she does on their behalf will seem to her intrinsically right and proper. Her end justifies all means in her own eyes.

I can think of no better illustration of such imperfect character than the central figure in Sheila Kaye Smith's story, "Sussex Gorse." There was a man admirable in many ways ; a tender husband and father ; clean-living, honourable, abstemious and hard-working ; yet he drives all his many children, one after another, into bitter resentment and rebellion, and most of them to disaster ; wrecks the lives of one wife after another, and in old age is completely isolated. And all this train of disasters is due to the domination of his life by one master-sentiment, his passion for the land, the farm of his fathers which he had set out to improve and enlarge.

We see similar defective character in some men of the highest intellectual powers and strong moral and religious sentiments. Devoutness, indeed, is apt to accentuate such defects ; it may render the man all the more confident of the rightness of all his actions, the worth of all his goals and the justifiability of all the means he adopts : for he is always on the Lord's side. I have in mind especially a British statesman of the first rank, one who held, to the end of his life, the devotion and admiration of one half of the people and, by the other half, was regarded as an unscrupulous hypocrite. I mean, of course, the late W. E. Gladstone. And in America we may find a parallel case in Woodrow Wilson.

The essential defect of such a person is that he has remained naïve, that is to say, he does not understand or critically appreciate his own motives. Whatever opinion

or purpose he holds at any moment seems to him absolutely right ; yet a few months later he may advocate with equal conviction and eloquence some view entirely inconsistent with, even directly opposed to, the one formerly held. Thus we hear him demand " Peace without victory " ; and a little later we see him calling for the application of overwhelming force, force without measure and without stint. The public seems to have no key to such characters, and, as in the two cases mentioned, remains divided into ardent admirers and harsh critics, giving indiscriminating praise and devotion or unmeasured denunciation.

Such whole-hearted uncritical confidence in the rightness of his opinions and purposes may contribute to a man's effectiveness, especially perhaps in public life, where success depends upon impressing the multitude and carrying along at the chariot-wheels some large part of the public. But such men, who are a danger to democracy, obtain power only because so large a part of the public remains, like themselves, in that state of incomplete character-development which we are discussing. Only with such a public are the arts of the demagogue effective ; and the spread of intellectual education and of knowledge of public affairs will not in itself provide a remedy.

An old-fashioned theory, still widely entertained in a vague way by the popular mind, favours the arrest of character in this imperfect state of development, I mean the theory of " conscience " as a divinely implanted organ that tells us what is right and what is wrong and impels us to do the right. For those who accept this theory can always find a justification for any line of action on which they are strongly set ; asserting that their conscience approves or impels to that course, they refuse to entertain any alternative, condemning perhaps as sophistry or casuistry any and every process of critical self-examination. That, of course, is a crude application of a crude theory ; but it is not uncommon for all that.

I said just now that the essence of the defect we are considering is naïvety. It would be truer perhaps to say that naïvety, lack of critical self-knowledge and self-judgment, especially lack of understanding of the motives

at work within one, is the ground of the defect. The defect itself is a lack of character-development; it can be remedied only by the exercise of critical self-consciousness. And, in this further development, there are two processes to be distinguished: first, the formation of some ideal of character; second, the critical application of this to oneself as a standard of comparison, accompanied by an effort to live up to that standard.

In the former process we are necessarily greatly influenced by admired examples, whether in real life, in history, or in art. The reflective adolescent often is seized with enthusiasm for some such character and strongly desires to emulate it, to become like that which he admires. And he may continue to be dominated by such a concrete ideal; but, more commonly, as his experience widens, he finds that other and widely different characters are also very admirable; and he has then to choose between them, or to construct for himself a composite ideal which shall combine the admirable traits of his models in an ideal suitable to his own nature and peculiar circumstances.

Too often the young person forms for himself an ideal in external and superficial terms. He sees a man of brilliant achievement and position, and, without insight into the traits of character which have enabled his hero to play a great rôle, wishes to make a similar career and position. The intellectual excellencies, the wit, the grasp, the learning, the eloquence, are more easily appreciated than the character-traits that lie beneath them and without which they are of little effect.

The effort to emulate intellectual qualities, if it is serious and sustained, may favour the development of character; but it is apt to be disappointing, and, even when successful, it tends to produce a very distorted and imperfect character. Yet this is the way in which the traditional English system of higher education chiefly works to produce character. It may seem that, in making this criticism of that system, I am flying in the face of accepted truth; for the exponents of the system have always claimed as its chief merit that, however woefully it may fail to develop intellectual interests, it does succeed in forming character; and this claim has

been very generally regarded as justly founded. I must, then, dwell a little on this point.

We may usefully distinguish between an ideal and an ambition. An ambition is the conception and the desire of great position, the desire to achieve something that will win the recognition and homage of one's fellows; it looks only to externals. It is the desire to do. An ideal is the desire to be something admirable, no matter whether progress towards its realization wins the admiration of our fellows or goes unrecognized. Adam Smith, in his famous "Theory of the Moral Sentiments," wrote that we have within us that which prompts us to desire to be praiseworthy as well as to desire praise. That is the distinction on which I am insisting. Ambition is the desire for praise; an ideal is the desire to be praiseworthy. We must not forget that, in order to become, we must act; that desires and good resolutions which do not issue into actions are of little effect in developing character; that we must "do noble deeds," rather than merely "dream them all day long." Nevertheless the distinction is valid and very important. Adapting an old witticism, we may say that ambition is the desire to get on and to get honour; while an ideal is a desire to be honest. Now, the English public-school system, with its prejudice against all introspection, its strong appeal to the competitive motive, its prizes and adulation for the successful athlete and scholar, greatly stimulates ambition; and English life in general with its great professional prizes, its immense rewards, its bishoprics, its titles, its governorships, its woolsack, its big assured incomes, its social consideration for those who reach the top of the tree, and its social ladder temptingly displayed for all to climb who can and will, all this exerts a similar stimulation on clever boys and men. It has the good result that the capacities of men are brought out and developed and turned into channels that are in the main of service to their country. And just that is a large part of the secret of Great Britain's success in the world. And it must be recognized that the lack in America of any similar organized system of honours and rewards is a weakness of the national life; for it leaves many talents undeveloped or fails to enlist them in the service of the

community. But it has the compensating advantage that, ambition being less stimulated, men are more free to pursue an ideal. It is true that the achievement of wealth becomes the ambition of many ; but it is widely recognized that it is not in itself a satisfying and sufficient ambition : hence, I suggest, the frequency in American life of munificent actions, often achieved in the most private manner ; actions almost without parallel in Great Britain, yet actions which have made possible so many of the great institutions of America and without which her civilization would have been indefinitely poorer.

We must not, then, decry ambition, " the last infirmity of noble minds " ; we must even recognize that that most irrational of desires, the desire for posthumous fame, has sustained great efforts and that it plays, perhaps, an indispensable part in the life of a nation, a part which justifies the institution of halls of fame, statues, memorials and commemorations. Yet we must recognize that ambition is an infirmity and understand why it is an infirmity. It is an infirmity because it is a desire for something less than the best or highest ; it makes for the formation of an imperfect character. A purely ambitious man, though he may sustain vast labour, achieve great efficiency, and render immense services, may yet be a rascal at heart. " If I had served God as well as I have served my king, he would not have abandoned me in my old age." That was the cry of a very ambitious man who had been extremely successful. Ambition, working alone, tends to produce an unscrupulous man ; for scruples often stand in the way of ambition.

And ambition is a weakness in another way : it is insatiable ; the attainment of the goal it has set itself seldom brings the satisfaction that it anticipated, seldom brings contentment and serenity. Rather, it becomes an appetite that is never satisfied, but demands ever to be fed anew with still louder plaudits from a vaster multitude. Alexander, weeping because there were no more worlds to conquer, illustrates the principle.

Ambition, then, is not enough. An ideal may, and in young men should, include an ambition. The desire and the pursuit of the ideal will hardly lead him into unscrupulous

conduct. Rather, such desire will be a safeguard, the surest that he can ever find, against wrongdoing and defects of character, against the temptations of ambition. And the man whose ultimate goal is an ideal of character need never fear that he will find himself in the painful position of Alexander ; to the last days of his life he may seek and find a legitimate satisfaction in the pursuit of it. Even when his powers decay, when he is ruined in fortune, disappointed of his ambition, blind, deaf, maimed, bedridden or decrepit, he may still render tribute to his ideal by bearing his afflictions with dignity and sweetness.

The formation of a worthy ideal is a gradual process, and to make the ideal one suited to one's nature and circumstances is a task that requires much discrimination and judgment. In this process, essentially the process of acquiring a "conscience," the youth is necessarily greatly influenced by the personalities he has learnt to admire ; and he may be aided by advice. For as T. H. Green, the great moral philosopher, truly remarks : " No one can make a conscience for himself unaided " ; he must absorb it from the moral tradition, in the main from the moral tradition of his own time and place ; though, if he be of a philosophic turn, he may seek to enlarge and refine his ideal by the study of other manners, other times ; he may find in the teaching of Plato or Aristotle, of Epicurus or the Stoic philosophers, of Buddha or Confucius, something that may appeal strongly to him as worthy of incorporation in his own ideal.

But, when some ideal has been formed, there remains the second part of the process to be accomplished, the critical application of it as a standard of his own conduct and a measure of his own character, and the discriminating effort to measure up to his standard. And this is the more difficult part of the process, the part in which we all fail more or less, the part in which we can never feel that there is nothing more to be done, and the part in which we must rely wholly on ourselves, in which no one can greatly aid us. As Mr. St. Loe Strachey says in his recent autobiography, after describing some of the major influences of his

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boyhood: "In the last resort a man is his own star and must make his own soul, though of course he has a right, nay, a duty, to give thanks for all good chances and happy circumstances."

Given an ideal of character, more or less lofty, more or less refined, more or less suited to his particular needs, and given a strong and persistent desire to realize that ideal in his own person, the youth is well set on the road to become a man of fine character.

But what is this desire which is to play this all-important rôle? Whence does it spring? What is its relation to other desires? What is its natural history? Here we touch on a very difficult problem which lies at the centre of all discussions of moral theory. To it philosophers have returned many widely different answers. Some have said it is the work of reason and that virtue is but a form of knowledge. Some, like Lord Shaftesbury, have said it is an inborn taste or æsthetic faculty. Many, following Bishop Butler and Charles Fox, the first of the Quakers, have said, in a great variety of formulations, that it is a special inborn moral faculty, call it a conscience, a moral sense, or what you will. Others again (the theological utilitarians) have said, with Paley, that it is the wise desire to escape the punishments and to secure the rewards of the life to come. And the naturalistic utilitarians of the school of Jeremy Bentham have said that it is the desire to secure happiness (or a maximum of pleasure and a minimum of pain) in this life; for they assert that society is so organized as in the main to reward virtue and to punish vice, and they assume that the wise man, seeing this fact, will naturally prefer virtue to vice, since he prefers pleasure to pain.

None of these time-honoured answers to the riddle has seemed to me acceptable, and many years ago I have proposed <sup>1</sup> a naturalistic solution of the problem which still seems to me essentially correct. Without presuming to return a definite answer to the question whether in some degree our moral nature, our tendency to seek the good, to pursue an ideal, is preformed in our inborn <sup>such</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In my "Social Psychology," in which book the theory of character was first propounded.

## THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

If husband and wife are so fortunate as to grow old together, they can more than ever give one another aid and comfort, untroubled by the snags and storms and anxieties of earlier years. Let them cultivate together the pleasures of reminiscence, which, after all, are the surest, the least liable to disappointment, the least likely to be regretted. And they are of no mean order of intensity, especially when sympathetically shared. Man's joys are chiefly in anticipating and in recollecting. The joys of anticipation are precarious and troubled. The joys of recollection may be wholly serene.

A normal old age is not without its beauty; and, by exercising that wisdom which a long life brings us, we may make its beauty more complete. The old may and should, no less than the young, adorn and enrich their social circle; and they may render this service consciously and serenely, free from the multitude of anxieties that oppress the young.

Each of us, then, as old age approaches, may fairly hope to become one of those "who without sadness shall be sage and gay without frivolity."